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Second Harvest Heartland statement on critical investments in hunger-fighting programs included in Gov. Walz and Lt. Gov. Flanagan's budget

The Governor's two-year budget plan, released Tuesday, includes over \$45 million for Minnesota's hunger-relief network, which continues to face unprecedented demand

BROOKLYN PARK, Minn. (Jan. 25, 2023) — [Second Harvest Heartland](#), one of the region's largest hunger-relief organizations, issued the following statement a day after Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan released the full details of their budget proposal, which includes \$45 million for food security and other investments in hunger-fighting initiatives at a time where demand continues to far outpace available resources:

"If we can't keep people fed, we won't get much else right," said Second Harvest Heartland CEO Allison O'Toole. "Food banks and food shelves can't rely on charity alone to meet the historic demand for food assistance, and we're grateful that Governor Walz's budget proposal includes support for hunger-relief organizations now and in the future. Moreover, this budget invests in long-term, sustainable solutions to hunger by providing universal school meals for all Minnesota students and offering a state-funded Child Tax Credit. We saw programs like these reduce food insecurity during the pandemic, and we must make these proposals permanent to better support families in need."

In 2022, Minnesota recorded more than 5.7 million food shelf visits, which is [nearly 1.9 million more than the previous record set in 2020](#). Grocery prices, gas, and rents reached historically high levels throughout last year while pandemic-era financial and nutrition supports have ended, leaving thousands of Minnesotans with few options to help keep food on their table. 1 in 6 people (over 800,000) living in Second Harvest Heartland's service area reached out for food assistance in 2021.

"We will not solve Minnesota's hunger crisis in two years, so it is vital that the state provides ongoing support for the organizations and communities on the front lines of this work," said O'Toole. "We are grateful that the Governor and Lieutenant Governor recognize the severity of the need, and Second Harvest Heartland will continue to work with lawmakers to pass a state budget that fully funds the programs that make the biggest impact for Minnesotans facing food insecurity. In addition to the proposals announced this week, we will advocate for a \$4.4 million increase in funding for Minnesota's Farm to Food Shelf program, an expedited \$5 million in funding for food shelves to provide immediate relief, and \$5 million to provide prepared meals for Minnesotans who don't have the home, health or ability to use the groceries our food bank offers."

About Second Harvest Heartland

At Second Harvest Heartland, we work to end hunger together. As one of the nation's largest, most efficient, and most innovative hunger-relief organizations, we leverage our unique position in the emergency food chain to make an impact. In close partnership with a network of 423 food shelf and nonprofit partners and 1,115 hunger-relief programs, we support those in our region facing hunger today. More than a food bank, we're a leading partner in the policies and programs that work to end hunger, like SNAP, school meals, and senior nutrition programs. And we're an innovator where food can be the solution, like FOODRx and Kitchen Coalition. Learn more at 2harvest.org.

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