

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SECOND HARVEST HEARTLAND, AREA HUNGER RELIEF PARTNERS CONNECT ‘UNPRECEDENTED’ POTHoles TO FOOD INSECURITY

St. Paul, MN – Second Harvest Heartland CEO Allison O’Toole was joined yesterday by Brandon Griffin, Senior VP of Operations at the Sanneh Foundation, and Jessica Francis, Executive Director of Open Cupboard, to sound the alarm bells regarding hunger in Minnesota and call on the Governor and legislative leaders to provide more funding for Minnesota’s food banks.

Held near a large pothole near the intersection of Cedar Street and East 12th Street in St. Paul, O’Toole referenced surveys showing that just one-third of Americans have the financial resources to pay for an unexpected expense such as a blown tire caused by a pothole.

“We just went through the hungriest winter in recent memory and this spring and summer are shaping up to be even worse. Right now, for far too many Minnesotans, one unexpected expense could be the difference between having food on the table or going hungry,” said O’Toole.

Francis described a recent visit to Today’s Harvest, a free food market serving hungry neighbors in the East Metro, by [a woman named Maria](#) who became food insecure after one such incident. She said this is one of many factors leading to a spike in demand for food in her community.

“At Open Cupboard, we’ve grown from serving about 400 households per week before the pandemic to more than 4,000 households every week now - and the need is still growing,” said Francis. *“In fact, last month saw another 40% increase in demand for our services over the previous month. There are so many people in need of fresh and healthy food right now that it’s really hard for us and the food shelves we work with to keep up.”*

In recent weeks, a [broad coalition](#) of food, agriculture and hunger-relief organizations have called for an increase to the budget target set for the Agriculture Committee. At a time where [rates of food insecurity are on the rise in Minnesota](#) and with a historic \$17.6 billion state budget surplus, Minnesota’s food bank network is pushing for additional investments to combat hunger during this legislative session, including the state’s [Farm to Food Shelf](#) program.

“With a \$17 billion state budget surplus, we have the resources to meet this moment, but Minnesota’s food banks have not yet seen increased funding despite the record need,” concluded O’Toole. *“That is why we are again calling on the Governor and legislative leaders to invest just \$10 million of that surplus in proven hunger-fighting initiatives like the state’s Farm*

to Food Shelf program. It is a small ask but one that will have a huge impact on our ability to serve our neighbors in need.”

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