



May 4, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. President,

At the Alliance to End Hunger, we are delighted to hear the news of the forthcoming White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health. Respectfully, I would like to share recommendations from a broad array of groups that are united in championing an end to hunger as a key goal of the Conference.

Alliance to End Hunger unites diverse sectors to address today's hunger and malnutrition needs and to solve the root causes of hunger at home and abroad. We are pleased to see ending hunger is a specific focus for the Conference.

In October 2021, we began a campaign to build support for the Conference with the Alliance membership, as well as allied organizations and businesses. We convened a working group that collaborated to plan actions and develop initial recommendations. (A list of the working group members is attached).

Our first action was a [sign-on letter](#) calling on the White House to make a public commitment to the Conference and prioritize ending hunger. The letter was signed by 182 organizations, including national nonprofits (anti-hunger and nutrition), healthcare organizations, corporations, faith-based organizations and community-based organizations. In addition, we initiated a pledge campaign to allow individuals from across the country to voice support for the Conference. The pledge reads, "*Dear President Biden, I believe ending hunger in America should be a national priority! I support a White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger & Health.*" To date, about 250 people have signed the pledge.

A key objective of the work group was to develop recommendations for the consideration of the Conference organizers. We thought about both process and content questions and concerns.

### **Process Recommendations**

As we considered process priorities or guiding principles for the Conference, we turned to lessons from the 1969 Conference. We identified two major gaps in the 1969 Conference that need to be addressed. These gaps were the lack of representation of people with lived experience of hunger and poverty and an understandable change over time on how we conceptualize racial equality and equity. Given the times, these gaps are not surprising.

Our first recommendation related to the process for the Conference is to *center the voices and experiences of people living with hunger and poverty*.

Accounts of lived experiences helped drive the creation of the 1969 Conference. For example, in a 1967 United States Senate subcommittee hearing on hunger in America, then civil rights attorney Marian Wright Edelman testified on behalf of impoverished Mississippi residents, shocking Senators into traveling to see the conditions firsthand. Following the hearing, anti-hunger and anti-poverty movements gained momentum nationwide, and President Nixon announced plans to convene a White House Conference to address the societal failures that resulted in these experiences.

However, during the Conference itself, the inclusion of individuals with lived experience was, at worst, lacking and, at best, lost in time. Research shows that Conference organizers intended to have “over 400 of the very poor themselves” from diverse backgrounds participate in the Conference. However, in many instances, organizations that represented people with lived experience were included rather than those with actual lived experiences. As a result, Conference participants primarily comprised directors of non-profits and presidents of non-governmental organizations. In addition, we have not identified evidence that individuals with lived experience or representatives of these individuals participated in Conference planning or earlier stages of the Conference.

Additional recommendations by the lived experience experts that comprise our work group include to:

- *Incorporate lived experience experts in all phases of planning, design and execution of the Conference.*
- *Remove barriers to meaningful participation for these individuals.*
- *Adopt a racial equity framework as a key value of the Conference.*

### **Content Recommendations**

Next, we turned questions about the content the Conference that the work group participants would like to see addressed. We focused on big picture questions, similar to the guiding questions used in the 1969 Conference. We organized ourselves in sectoral groups to provide recommendations. These sectors included national nonprofits, lived experience experts, faith-based organizations, universities and corporations. You will note these are initial brainstorming thoughts by the participants and may be refined in the future. Their guiding questions by sector are below.

#### Guiding Questions: National Non-Profits

- Why are people hungry? What are the root causes of hunger? What are the solutions?
- What new programs can address gaps? How do we boost up “nutrition” assistance without harming choice in SNAP?
- How do we hold corporations accountable to pay people enough, so they don't end up on the food line?
- What are the top, game changing, policy ideas that we can propose such as living wage, universal school meals, and child tax credit?
- How can we ensure grassroots, BIPOC and local organizations have a real seat at the table in setting strategy?
- How do we change deep seated narratives around hunger?
- What are innovative solutions to reach rural/ hard-to-reach communities that are sustainable?

- How can the whole of government work at the intersection of hunger via each department (USDA, HHS, HUD, DOL, Justice, etc.)?
- How do we connect hunger and nutrition to medical care and get health care providers engaged in lifting-up and sustaining programs?
- How do we incorporate policy solutions that address root causes- like economic injustice and racism- as core solutions to ending hunger?

#### Guiding Questions: Living Experience Experts

- How will you ensure the expertise of lived experience/directly impacted people will be included in every aspect of the Conference? Experts with lived experience can speak to every aspect of policy, health implications, systems, etc.
- How will you incorporate the living expertise of the end user to inform the modification of the processes of federal nutrition programs for more efficient, effective, and equitable outcomes? They should be incorporated at all levels- design, implementation, and critical review to ensure programs/policies are working as they were intended, and to restructure if not.
- How can you infuse trauma informed care into federal nutrition and other government programs to address the effects of poverty on the individual and family? How can we ultimately restructure systems and change culture to lessen/eliminate trauma?
- How are you addressing the needs of communities that are not currently included in federal nutrition programs?
- How will you work to address the institutional and systemic roots of racism (example- work requirements) in federal nutrition programs? Will you commit to a review all programs through an equity framework vetted by those who are the end users of those programs?
- How can you ensure a human rights/dignity-based lens in food distribution programs and systems? How can you ensure cultural/religious/health needs of individuals are respected?
- Will you incorporate and fund the Community Food Utility model as common infrastructure for food access?
- How can you ensure adequate food is available to people experiencing homelessness? In some locations it has been made illegal to distribute food to people experiencing homelessness. These laws/rules need to be reversed.
- How can you reframe SNAP to assure nutritional access for all? SNAP began as a defense program, however has been a stigmatizing program since its start.
- How can people on SNAP manage more expensive gluten (or other) dietary needs?
- How can you address the transfer of power back to indigenous peoples (land, agriculture, resource management, etc.) to secure our food sovereignty? How are we including the organizations doing this work as leaders in these conversations and actions?
- How will you work to address just transitions of land and resources through institutional and systems change?
- How will you center, fund and institutionalize community farms and agriculture as focal points for food sovereignty?
- How can you reduce food waste since the US wastes 160+ billion lbs of food a year? For example, France recently passed a law saying grocery stores can no longer just throw away food that is still good because it is not selling/slightly past date, that it needs to be donated. Can we do that here? It would help with climate because there is less going to landfills.
- What steps are you taking now to assure that crop insurance is available to all agricultural producers for all varieties of crops therefore securing American food production? Change is

needed for Title one in the Farm Bill to reflect appropriate and equitable access to crop insurance programs.

- What steps are you taking now to achieve institutional mandates that reflect the climate crisis our food systems are facing? Climate change is real and is happening now. Systems change is imperative.

#### Guiding Questions: Faith Based Organizations

- How do we ensure all service providers (especially faith-based) provide services that are welcoming regardless of a person's status, gender, orientation, etc.
- How do we make sure that religiously appropriate foods are available through public and private partners who serve those in need?
- How are we using technology to engage the faith-based community in helping to solve the hunger problem in America? (They are the first to set up and help in local communities.)
- How can the government partner with faith-based organizations more effectively, not only in providing for immediate nutrition need but also for more long-term support?
- How does the White House partner with the faith-based community to ensure representation by all those who are part of those communities without stereotypical views of each community and how they are represented?

#### Guiding Questions: Universities

- What is the best role for universities and academicians in the Conference?
- How do we ensure the experience of university student is represented?
- What federal assistant program needs to bridge free and reduced school lunch with assistance such as SNAP for low-income students?
- How do we ask questions in a way that pushes progress and not the same results? And make sure to frame our questions to push participants to think outside the box of hunger?
- How do we create healthy food systems?
- What is the impact of food and nutrition policy on health, sustainability, resilience and equity?

#### Guiding Questions: Businesses/Corporations

- How can we get major corporate businesses to commit additional resources to this issue?
- How can we apply private sector innovation-- in both food or program operation-- to enhance nutrition and address barriers that result in food insecurity?
- What is the role of public private partnerships to fill gaps in public programs to address nutrition and food insecurity?
- CEO Action for Racial Equity (Food Equity Group) submitted the following questions:
  - Overall Conference Questions:
    - How can we improve health outcomes through a robust food strategy and reduce cost to society (e.g., healthcare, lost productivity)?
    - How can we make nutritious foods accessible and affordable for all Americans at all times?
    - How do we drive inefficiencies/waste out of the system (e.g., food waste, process waste)?

- How do we leverage lessons learned from COVID response to improve the food system, food insecurity, programs, processes and technology?
- How will we measure success and progress, while improving transparency, accountability and sustainability?
- Racial Equity Questions:
  - How can we close the racial food insecurity gap?
  - How can we close the racial healthy food access gap (e.g., grocery access)?
  - How can we close the racial obesity gap in children?
  - How can we close the racial life expectancy gap through food programs?
  - How do we drive transparency to verify programs and processes are equitable?
  - How can we reduce disproportionate climate impact of the food system on the Black community?

This list of questions represents overarching questions and concerns of the various sectors engaged in the Alliance White House Conference Work Group and we hope you will consider them as you plan the Conference. We look forward to engaging with you as partners in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



Eric P. Mitchell  
Executive Director  
Alliance to End Hunger

## **White House Conference Working Group Members**

AARP

Alliance to End Hunger

Alliance to End Hunger's Hunger Free Communities Advisory Council

Auburn University, Hunger Solutions Institute /Universities Fighting World Hunger

Bayer

Black Women's Health Imperative

Bread for the World

CEO Action for Racial Equity

Corteva Agriscience

DoorDash

Farm Link Project

Feeding America

Food Research & Action Center

Global Child Nutrition Foundation

Instacart

Islamic Relief USA

Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger

Meals On Wheels America

National WIC Association

Nuro

RESULTS

RESULTS Experts on Poverty

Root Cause Coalition

Save the Children

Share Our Strength/No Kid Hungry

Souper Bowl of Caring

United Way Worldwide

WhyHunger