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Tarrant Area Food Bank and Feeding Texas Announces 2023 State Legislative Priorities

Texas lawmakers can help fight hunger in the Tarrant Area through the 88th legislative session.

FORT WORTH, TEXAS – As state lawmakers begin introducing legislation, both the Tarrant Area Food Bank(TAFB) and Feeding Texas are calling on our elected officials to push for policy solutions that address hunger and food insecurity in the 13-county service area.

“The world around us has shifted and Texans everywhere are struggling with the rising cost of food and other expenses,” **said Celia Cole, CEO of Feeding Texas.** “Inflation is leading to a surge in the number of clients seeking emergency food from the Tarrant Area Food Bank. **Said Julie Butner, President, and CEO of TAFB.** “Tarrant Area Food Bank is responding as best we can to the increased demand for food, but fighting hunger is a public-private partnership and we need the Texas Legislature at the table.”

The Feeding Texas network has identified five key legislative priorities for the upcoming session. Tarrant Area Food Bank are calling on lawmakers to:

1. **Increase funding for produce rescue** to help food banks provide nutritious food to their communities. The Surplus Agricultural Products Grant helps food banks rescue unsellable produce for distribution to hungry Texans, offsetting losses for Texas growers and mitigating the impact of food waste on the environment.
2. **Index the SNAP vehicle asset test to inflation to better reflect today’s car values.** Current limits on vehicle value haven’t been updated since 2001 (primary car) and 1974 (additional cars), forcing families to choose between a reliable vehicle and feeding their families.
3. **Improve college completion rates** by maintaining access to SNAP for low-income students enrolled in vocational and technical degree programs. This policy was adopted during the pandemic to ensure students can access the food assistance they need to finish their

degrees and go on to gainful employment. *This pandemic-era change makes good business sense for Texas.*

4. **Support people exiting the criminal justice system to enroll in SNAP** by implementing pre-release registration. By ensuring access to food, SNAP supports the re-entry process and reduces recidivism. **Note:** *This is not an expansion of benefits; these individuals are already eligible for SNAP.*

5. **Improve health outcomes and reduce state healthcare costs** by piloting a Medicaid reimbursement program for medical nutrition programs, such as Food Rx and Medically Tailored Meals. These proven interventions demonstrate that healthy food is good medicine.

Food banks are investing these funds in expanding their infrastructure and building the capacity of their communities to reach more people in need. In Weatherford, Tarrant Area Food Bank West launched in 2022 as a new satellite location in Parker County to better serve their growing population of folks living in rural and remote areas. The facility is equipped with a food distribution center, a commercial kitchen, an outside community garden, a food preparation area and their first Mission Market store (encouraging client choice in a grocery store format), which is now serving, on average, about 200-300 families per week.

The Tarrant Area Food Bank can provide access to clients who would be positively affected by the priorities passing in the Legislative session. Interviews can be coordinated by the food bank at your request.

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TARRANT AREA FOOD BANK (TAFB): TARRANT AREA FOOD BANK (TAFB): Communities where everyone has the food they need. Through our network of over 450 partner agencies, TAFB provides access to over 1M nutritious meals weekly to children and adults facing hunger. This work resulted in access to 55 million nutritious meals in fiscal year 2021. Learn more at www.TAFB.org.

Feeding Texas leads a unified effort for a hunger-free Texas. Learn more and find your local food bank at www.feedingtexas.org.