

National Hunger Commission Report

Thoughts on Implementation Possibilities for States and Municipalities

February, 2016

The Bi-partisan Report of the National Commission on Hunger was released January 4, 2016. Created by Congress in 2014 as part of the Farm Bill, the Commission was charged with providing policy recommendations to Congress and the USDA to more effectively use existing programs and funds of the Department of Agriculture to combat domestic hunger and food insecurity. While we hope that readers will review and consider the entire report (an hour's investment of time), the Executive Summary will provide basic background and context. The full Recommendations Section provides the complete set of twenty recommendations, including rationale and action items.

While some recommendations will require regulatory changes or action by Congress, there are important opportunities which can be addressed through policy change or administrative strategies at the State and/or municipal level - actions which do not require an Act of Congress.

This document seeks to identify and encourage action on certain Hunger Commission recommendations by the Governor's Task Force on Food Security and/or by the Governor's Office or various State Agencies. The Hunger Commission recommendations are bi-partisan, well-researched and thoroughly considered. The research and testimony is available for review. The following recommendations may represent an opportunity for Nevada to begin implementation at the state level:

SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (R 1-10)

- Improve state support for job training, placement and career development for SNAP recipients, and ensuring that necessary supports and infrastructure are in place to facilitate finding work. (R1 – 4 action items)
- Address the CLIFF EFFECT – improving responsiveness to earned-income fluctuations (R2)
- Creating a more streamlined and effective approach to re-certification for SNAP recipients (R2)
- Create a financial incentives (healthy bucks, double your bucks) program to encourage and facilitate purchase of high quality nutrition with SNAP funds at Farmers Markets and groceries.(R3)
- Reform of SNAP Nutrition Education (SNAP-ED) to ensure that investment produces positive impact on health improvement and food security – use of high quality evaluation tools (R6)
- Maximize SNAP's ability to promote well-being: “no wrong door” approach between SNAP and non-nutrition family support programs. This is NOT “one stop shop” – (R7- 3 action items)
- R8 encourages use of demonstration projects and speedy determination by USDA. If we have good and innovative ideas - let's put them forth!
- Improved training for front-line SNAP caseworkers and related metrics – (R9)
- Address wellbeing of military and former military families – high risk and high reward.

Child Nutrition Programs (R11-14)

A number of the child nutrition program recommendations are included in various bills that comprise the Child Nutrition Reauthorization package – addressing the congregate meal requirements, changing areal eligibility from 50% F/R needy to 40% F/R; and expanded eligibility for Summer EBT (monthly \$ allocation of \$30-40 through a WIC-like EBT card) for families in locations where summer meal programs are inaccessible or unable to be implemented.

In addition, the recommendation to utilize Medicaid eligibility to establish F/R status has been made by the White House at its recent conference on childhood hunger. Many Medicaid families choose not to apply for SNAP although eligible due to stigma. This limits direct certification for school meals.

Seniors and Ill/Disabled (R 15-16)

The Commission identified the need to expand home-delivered meals for seniors beyond current funding levels through the Older Americans Act, and for those who are ill or disabled but not yet 65, (who are not eligible for meals under that funding stream). Changes to Medicare (federal issue) and use of Medicaid waivers and/or Medicaid Section 1915 (c)(state jurisdiction) can be used to afford ill/disabled and/or seniors between 60-65 the same nutrition assistance as those over 65. This is a challenge to health which can be easily mitigated.

Incentivize and Leverage Corporate, Nonprofit and Public/Private Partnerships - (R18)

It is abundantly clear that the USDA nutrition programs and charitable food distribution alone cannot end hunger. The Commission identified the need for cross-sector engagement (food, affordable housing, health, jobs/income, child care, workforce development, etc.) as crucial to solving hunger. This particular recommendation identifies further opportunities, including Hunger Free Communities collective impact efforts, incentives to improve donations of food, eliminate food waste, improvement and wider dissemination of Good Samaritan laws, incentives for farmers and social enterprise that supports education, job training and employment.

At this time, Washoe County is highly engaged in the Truckee Meadows Healthy Communities Initiative, long-term, cross-sector, collective impact initiative, which could be used as a pilot for the state. Engaging business and economic development sectors in the conversation around solving hunger in Nevada will address the jobs/income/workforce development piece which is so crucial to a successful outcome.

White House (and State) Leadership Council To End Hunger (R19-20)

As mentioned above, the root causes of hunger are many and varied, and the consequences of hunger are far beyond the reach and effectiveness of nutrition assistance programs. To improve the overall health and wellbeing of people in the United States this recommendation calls for the White House to mount a thoughtful, coordinated and focused effort to address hunger and its root causes.

This Commissioner believes that, by extension, each state should do the same. Much can be accomplished locally in the years it frequently takes for solutions to trickle down from Federal agencies and Congress. These recommendations involve a willingness to review all programs meant to assist low-income families for effectiveness, and a willingness to candidly discuss root cause issues. Cross agency collaboration at the state level, and among the eleven key Federal agencies which administer the wide variety of programs addressing these issues is crucial.

A strong Leadership Council will also include strong representation, participation and commitment from the corporate, non-profit, university and faith-based sectors, per the recommendation, along with civic engagement in our communities and the involvement of those experiencing hunger. ***The Governor's Council on Food Security could be the basis for this Leadership Council. Ensuring that our Council becomes permanent through legislation in the next session would be a great first step.***

Recommendations 19 and 20 are perhaps the most important of all these carefully considered and crafted recommendations, because with these two, the first 18 could easily be addressed.

Lastly, R20 calls on the Leadership Council to End Hunger to monitor hunger at the Federal and State levels of eight special, at-risk populations identified by the Commission as particularly vulnerable to hunger.

States and municipalities have an opportunity and perhaps a responsibility to take and encourage action to implement recommendations where possible and at the very least, begin a dialogue about how to begin solving hunger, community by community.



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