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Report: 1 in 4 San Franciscans at Risk of Food Insecurity

Public hearing today to examine causes, cures for food insecurity

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (Nov. 21, 2013) – San Francisco Supervisors, community leaders and residents will gather at City Hall at 10 a.m. today, Nov. 21, to hear findings from two comprehensive reports about the growing challenges of food security in San Francisco. Among the key findings: 1 in 4 San Francisco residents are at risk of being food insecure and struggle to attain and prepare enough nutritious food to support basic physical and mental health.

“The goal of the hearing is to bring together key leaders and agencies to figure out how we can most effectively address food insecurity in our community,” said Supervisor Eric Mar, sponsor of the hearing. “The reports not only provide key data about food insecurity, but also identify actions we can take to end hunger among seniors, children and the homeless in our city.”

The reports – “*Assessment of Food Security in San Francisco*,” produced by the San Francisco Food Security Task Force, and “*A Changing Landscape: Food Security and Services in San Francisco’s Tenderloin*,” produced by the Tenderloin Hunger Task Force – provide data about food insecurity city wide, as well as by district, highlighting challenges and solutions for addressing food insecurity among vulnerable populations.

“We believe San Francisco can be a model city that can achieve food security and zero hunger among its residents, and today’s hearing is an important step toward that vision,” said Paula Jones, Director of Food Systems at the San Francisco Department of Public Health, and member of the San Francisco Food Security Task Force. “We have all the key ingredients necessary to move forward: strong collaboration among government, non-profit agencies, and the private sector, robust food programs that can reach vulnerable populations, as well as an understanding of the poor health implications of food insecurity.”

The public hearing will take place during the Neighborhood Services and Safety Committee Meeting, 10 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 21, Room 250, City Hall. The hearing is sponsored by Supervisor Eric Mar and co-sponsored by Supervisors David Chiu, David Campos, Malia Cohen, Jane Kim and Norman Yee. Leaders from the city’s major hunger non-profits and their clients will also be present to comment.

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Key Findings from the Reports

- **1 in 4 San Francisco residents (28 percent) are at risk of being food insecure**, living below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) and therefore their ability to attain and prepare enough nutritious food to support their basic physical and mental health is limited or uncertain.
- **Nonprofit food programs continue to struggle to meet demand.** The number of meals provided by San Francisco nonprofits grew from 27.1 million in 2007 to 34.3 million in 2011.
- **CalFresh (formerly food stamps) is underutilized by many who are eligible including families with children** in San Francisco: While 26,000 SFUSD children are eligible for free school meals, only 13,079 school-aged children are enrolled in CalFresh.
- **More than 45,000 low income seniors and disabled adults in San Francisco who receive Supplemental Security Income are not eligible for CalFresh (formerly food stamps).**
- **More than 19,000 housing units lack complete kitchens**, making storage and preparation of healthy meals extremely difficult or impossible.
- **Almost 60 percent of homeless people in San Francisco utilize free meal programs.** This is up from 55 percent in 2011. Even with free food resources such as dining rooms and shelter meals, homeless people experience high rates of food insecurity.
- **District 6 (includes Tenderloin, SOMA, Mid-Market) has the highest rate of food insecurity in the city**, with 46 percent of residents living below 200 percent of FPL. Fifteen percent of households in District 6 lack complete kitchens, making storage and preparation of healthy meals impossible.

The reports will be published online on Nov. 20, 2013 at www.sfdph.org/foodsecurity. To request an advance copy of the report, contact Paula Jones at paula.jones@sfdph.org. Fact sheets summarizing the report will be available to the press at the public hearing.

The reports are produced by the San Francisco Food Security Task Force and the Tenderloin Hunger Task Force, coalitions of organizations working to improve access to affordable and healthy food for San Francisco's most vulnerable people.

Members of the task forces supporting this hearing include: Community Living Campaign, Department of Aging and Adult Services, Department of Children, Youth and their Families, Episcopal Community Services of San Francisco, GLIDE, Meals On Wheels of San Francisco, Project Open Hand, Salvation Army, San Francisco Department of Public Health, San Francisco Human Service Agency, SF and Marin Food Banks, SF Environment, St. Anthony's, Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation, and UC San Francisco's Center for Vulnerable Populations at SFGH.

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