

White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health Act

Congressman James P. McGovern and Congresswoman Jackie Walorski

Senator Cory Booker and Senator Mike Braun

Background:

It has been more than 50 years since the United States convened a White House conference to comprehensively address the issues of food, hunger, health, and nutrition in the United States. Yet today in the U.S., more than 38,000,000 individuals live in households that face food insecurity, 12,600,000 of whom are children and 5,000,000 of whom are seniors and persons with disabilities or critical illnesses. Moreover, as the United States continues to grapple with food insecurity, we now face a second challenge—nutrition insecurity—that is plaguing our nation and hindering the success of our nation's youth.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only further exacerbated existing problems with nutrition and food insecurity in the United States. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 42,000,000 individuals, including 13,000,000 children, are projected to experience food insecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the important link between nutrition, diet-related disease, and health outcomes. In fact, diet-related diseases greatly worsen outcomes from COVID-19, contributing to nearly 2/3 of all COVID-19 hospitalizations in the United States. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted global and local food supply chains, identifying the fragility and importance of the food system as a national security issue and making clear that a diverse local and regional food system is essential to the resilience of the United States.

Legislation:

The White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health Act is bipartisan, bicameral legislation that authorizes guidance to the White House to host a second conference. If passed, the President shall call the conference to be convened no later than 18 months after the Policy Committee is established. The Policy Committee will be decided by the Co-Chairs (the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Secretary of the Treasury) and will include 25 members ranging from healthcare leaders, persons with lived experience, farmers and ranchers, and members of Congress.

The Conferences goals include:

- 1) Making fundamental policy recommendations with respect to ending hunger, improving nutrition, making the food system more resilient, and creating sustainable markets for farmers and ranchers in the United;
- 2) Identifying the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the state of food and nutrition insecurity;
- 3) Exploring the impact of racial, urban, rural, and geographic disparities on hunger and food and nutrition insecurity;
- 4) Identifying viable solutions to end hunger by 2030, reduce ½ the level of food insecurity by 2025, and reducing ½ level of diet-related illnesses by 2030;
- 5) Reviewing the structure, scope, and effectiveness of existing laws, regulations, or programs;
- 6) Determining the extent to which current Federal, State, and local programs can help improve the nutritional health of individuals who live in a State to better use available resources and ensure greater coordination among those programs;
- 7) Identifying ways to incorporate the healthcare system; and
- 8) Identifying opportunities for effective partnerships between government, private industry, labor, healthcare, independent farmers, and nonprofit sectors to fight hunger in the United States.