

# 2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health:

## Toolkit & Resources for Submitting Comments



**Useful Links:** [Official conference website](#) | [Submit your ideas & stories](#)

This toolkit contains the following to help you draft and submit an impactful comment:

1. Background
2. Why You Should Submit a Comment
3. A Chance to See Your Values in Action
4. What Can YOU Do? Raise Your Voice to Shift Power
5. Immediate Policy Opportunities
6. pass the Mic: Next Steps for You or Your Organization

## Background

In September 2022, the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health will convene to introduce a “coordinated strategy to accelerate progress and drive transformative change in the U.S. to end hunger, improve nutrition and physical activity, and close the disparities surrounding them.”

The first conference, over 50 years ago, framed the pressing questions of hunger in America for the policymakers of the time, resulting in landmark legislation to expand anti-hunger programs. This conference will revisit the subject with an increased focus on the impact of food assistance programs on nutrition and health. The White House has proposed a goal of ending hunger and increasing healthy eating and physical exercise by 2030, in order to reduce health disparities.

Conference planning is being led by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in conjunction with leadership level staff from the Biden-Harris Administration. By July 15, 2022, the public is invited to share feedback to inform a national strategy that will be announced at the Conference.

## Why You Should Submit a Comment

This is a landmark opportunity to share directly with federal agencies and Presidential Administration staff about the lived realities of hunger, nutrition, and health in your communities—and to raise your voice to call for the policy changes needed to solve these issues.

Need more info? Contact [karen@farmtoschool.org](mailto:karen@farmtoschool.org)

# The White House Conference planners have proposed five issue area “pillars” to group experiences and policy solutions:



1. Improve food access and affordability



2. Integrate nutrition and health



3. Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices



4. Support physical activity for all



5. Enhance nutrition and food security research

See more information about each pillar on the conference website [here](#).

Let's use this moment to center the experiences of people impacted most by inequities in our food system, including the systemic racial inequities baked into agriculture and nutrition policies. Please share your thoughts within the pillars they have set out on the conference website [here](#) to call for transformative change.

Advocates can address specific policy actions within these pillars that will make a difference for your community that USDA, HHS, and the White House should immediately act on.

## A Chance to See Your Values in Action

Bring your unique perspectives as stakeholders of our food system. Whether you represent producers and farm workers who connect kids with fresh food, school food workers and directors who operate under USDA rules to bring kids the best food they can, parents and advocates, and communities who rely on child nutrition programs and other federal nutrition assistance programs to nourish kids. It takes a community to ensure quality foods are passed down the table to students every day in a sustainable way. Whatever your role in our food community, you are impacted and have an impact! So we need your voice to help shape the next fifty years of nutrition strategies.

We believe that a coordinated policy strategy built on six shared community values will move us closer to an equitable food system that promotes the health of all school children and benefits producers, workers, educators, and their communities to truly transform nutrition and health. **Let the White House know how you want to see these values centered in policy solutions.**





# Our Shared Community Values

## **Economic justice**

Farm to school and ECE isn't just about food miles, it's about the livelihoods of the people who grew, harvested, processed, and prepared this food. We have the chance to build relationships between producers, workers, and consumers in ways that enrich communities and address economic racial injustices.

## **Environmental justice**

Education and the purchasing power of meal programs can shift our food system away from practices that contribute to climate change and pollute communities of color, and towards a more equitable, sustainable use of our soil and water.

## **Health impact**

Farm to school and ECE activities go beyond getting kids the calories they need, but also give them the tools for childhood nourishment and lifelong health. In addition to key nutrients provided by school meals, kids should be empowered with the knowledge and skills to build healthy habits later in life and increase their sovereignty in our food system. School nutrition professionals should receive the equipment, training, and operational support to increase whole-ingredient, scratch cooking of healthier and tasty meals.

## **Prioritizing racial equity**

Progress towards a just food system requires us to address the historic and ongoing structural racism embedded in our food system and to actively promote food sovereignty and racial equity in farm to school and ECE activities.

## **Respecting workers and educators**

School nutrition professionals play essential roles in promoting fresh, healthy foods for our kids. The workers who harvest, process, transport, prepare and serve the vast majority of our nation's food supply deserve -- but don't currently have -- the same legal protections as workers in other industries in our country. Policies and practices should respect their rights and value their work appropriately.

## **Animal welfare**

Humane treatment of animals in food production is a key part of a respectful, relational – not extractive – food system. Inhumane conditions in meat and poultry production are intertwined with the corporate consolidation of our food system, and the prioritization of cheaply produced meat at the expense of animal welfare, worker safety, farmer livelihoods, and community health.

# What can YOU do?

## Raise your voice to shift power



Use this opportunity to submit a comment to the White House Conference. They want to hear your stories and are encouraging us to share your experiences with hunger and/or diet-related diseases. All of your ideas and stories will directly inform the national strategy to be released at the Conference, so we encourage you to submit comments using the form on the website here by July 15 to be sure that your ideas are considered.

### Suggested outline for your comment:

- **Share your story** — powerful first-person experiences with how the realities of hunger, inequitable food systems, and health disparities have impacted you and your communities.
- **Share your specific recommendations** — the immediate actions and long-term, sweeping changes that are needed to end hunger.



### As a Parent

- What are the biggest barriers to affordable food access for you?
- How do school and ECE meal programs support your family and how could they do better?
- How do you see your family's foodways and traditions represented in meal programs and "healthy food" standards? If not, how can they?
- What health impacts are there on your kids and community of inequities in the food system and in nutrition assistance policies?
- What are the *most* important changes you want to see?



### As a Farmer or Farmworker

- What are the biggest barriers to accessing schools, early childcare centers, and institutions for you?
- How have you participated in farm to school in ways that have benefited your farm economically? What about the other benefits?
- During the pandemic communities created incredibly unique solutions to issues of hunger. Do you have examples of how your community came together? How could those emergency actions turn into longer-term solutions?
- What are the *most* important changes you want to see?



### As a Student

- Do you worry about where your food comes from? Do you worry about what's in your food? Do you take into consideration the conditions on farms, in factories, and in kitchens when choosing your food?
- If you could wave a magic wand and create the perfect food system, what would that look like? Feel like? Taste like?
- What are the *most* important changes you want to see?



### As a School Nutrition Professional

- What are the biggest issues you face regarding feeding your students right now?
- What lessons learned from the pandemic and solutions would you like to see continued?
- What are your biggest barriers in local procurement?
- What are your biggest challenges in serving culturally relevant meals? What about procuring the ingredients needed for those menus?
- What initiatives and projects would you like your program to take on if you were equipped with the proper resources?
- What are the *most* important changes you want to see?



### As a Policemaker in my institution, district, or state

- How did your community come together to address the immediate hunger needs during the pandemic?
- How can you envision farm to school as an economic boost to your community?
- What are the biggest barriers to regional and local food systems for your community?
- What are some examples of incredible farm to school/ece programs happening in your community? What resources does your community need to expand those programs?
- What are the *most* important changes you want to see?

We are stronger together and when we get specific. Here are some policy solutions we already endorse. Feel free to include in your response to back up your personal comments:

## **Increase Child Nutrition Program Reimbursements**

This needs to reflect the true cost of providing healthy meals for all kids.

## **Increase the Positive Impact of Child Nutrition Program Purchasing and Operations by:**

- Greater flexibility to prioritize local and values-based purchasing
- Supply chain reforms of the USDA Foods system that gets products to schools
- Investment in school nutrition professionals with training, opportunities, and worker support

## **Ensure Nutrition Standards Reflect and Support Health Outcomes**

- Policy solutions and research to integrate nutrition and health should focus on increasing food sovereignty and addressing disparities in actual health conditions. Solutions should not focus primarily on flawed measures such as weight and BMI, nor try to restrict food choices. Any solutions targeting "unhealthy" food should focus on addressing predatory practices in food retail and marketing.
- Increased access to nourishing school and early care and education (ECE) meals gives kids the exposure and opportunity to cultivate food skills, such as their choices of food and food preparation, that will empower them for a lifetime.

## **Center Historically Marginalized Communities So That ALL Benefit**

- Policies to integrate nutrition and health should incorporate and celebrate traditional and culturally important foods and foodways, rather than emphasizing a single meal pattern for health rooted in Eurocentric diet assumptions.
- Centering the racial equity impacts of all child nutrition policies, including improvements to existing child nutrition policies and proposals that equitably prioritize communities of color and BIPOC producers.
- Research should be respectful of participants and communities, particularly communities of color who have historically been marginalized as research subjects by academic models.

## **Support Food Sovereignty**

- Strengthening the reach and equitable access of all scales of farm to school activities.
- Supporting all other forms of nutrition assistance and food access (SNAP, WIC, living wage initiatives) and true food sovereignty for communities (going beyond nutrition assistance to living wages and a community powered food system)
- Consumers will have the ability to make the healthiest choices for themselves and their communities when they have true food sovereignty – the financial and cultural resources to control and determine their participation in the food system.
- Policies that fully support children, families, and their educational communities will give them the ability to make their own informed food choices.



## **Pass the Mic Next Steps for You or Your Organization**

Encourage others in your network to share their own experiences and recommendations, particularly community members who are often shut out of policy discussions. You can:

- Host your own listening session for your network. The White House Conference organizers have created toolkits in several languages to help reduce language barriers. Submit feedback on behalf of your group by July 15.
- Share on social media or on your email newsletter! Any member of the public can share their experience and recommendations to inform how national leaders should approach hunger, nutrition, and health policies.