

Madam Chair, Members of the Committee, my name is Carol Pace. I am a volunteer with AARP Colorado. AARP has over 670,000 members in Colorado and is focused on Coloradans age 50 and above, and their families.

AARP supports SB 23-027, the Food Pantry Assistance Grant Program.

Older adults have an increased risk of being hungry or food insecure. Research shows reasons for this may include being on Fixed Incomes, having Limited Mobility, and experiencing Changes in Health.

Research also reveals that older adults are concerned about paying for Food, amongst other basic needs, such as paying for Medical Care and Medicines, Utilities, Rent or Mortgage and Transportation or Gas for a car. Additional issues that contribute to food insecurity amongst older adults include that some are home-bound, transportation to food resources may be challenging, and even that food boxes could weigh up to 30 lbs. and be difficult to lift and transport even if they were available.

Colorado food access statistics and rates show that older Coloradans are continually at higher risk of food insecurity, and that is compounded by racial and ethnic disparities, geographical locations within the state, food deserts and other factors. Feeding Colorado reports reaching 14,000 older Coloradans, but estimate there could be 90,000-100,000 eligible older Coloradans for their program.

Food pantries and food banks are critical to address food insecurity in older adults.

We ask that the committee support SB 23-027.

Respectfully,

Carol Pace, AARP Volunteer Advocate

Selected References

1. **Colorado Food Insecurity Rates by County.** map.feedingamerica.org/county/2020/overall/colorado
2. **AARP Policy Book 2021-2022: Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs.** policybook.aarp.org
3. **AARP Policy Book 2021-2022: Drive to End Hunger (DTEH).** endseniorhunger.aarp.org
4. **Frongillo EA, Warren AM. An Evaluation Report: Senior Food-assistance, Related Programming, and Seniors' Experiences Across the Feeding America Network: Senior Food Insecurity Exploratory Research. Feeding America, 2022.**
5. **Ziliak JP, Gundersen C. The State of Senior Hunger in 2020. Prepared for Feeding America, 2022.**
6. **Gundersen C, Ziliak J. Hunger Among Adults Age 50-59 in 2020: An Annual Report. Prepared for Feeding America, 2022.**
7. **Feeding America, "Hunger in America 2014: A Report on Older Adult Clients and Households of the Feeding America Network in 2013: Baby Boomers and Beyond – Facing Hunger After Fifty," July 2015. Sponsored in part by AARP Foundation.**



Members of the House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee,

My name is Jillian Fabricius, and I am Deputy Director with Illuminate Colorado, a statewide nonprofit working to strengthen families, organizations, and communities to prevent child maltreatment. I am submitting written testimony **to ask you for a yes vote on SB23-027 Food Pantry Assistance Grant Program.**

When we build food security for families, we strengthen the foundation for families and communities to thrive.

Illuminate supports SB23-027 for two main reasons:

1. **SB23-027 would build food security for families, promoting protective factors to prevent child maltreatment.** Research shows that concrete support in times of need is a protective factor in preventing child maltreatment¹. Food insecurity impacts parental well being by increasing rates of stress, anxiety, and depression.² When families have access to food and nutrition resources (concrete supports), they experience reduced stress, preventing child maltreatment. This bill would promote food security and strengthen families by ensuring local food pantries have the financial resources needed to effectively serve families experiencing food insecurity.
2. **SB23-027 would promote healthy child development by building food security.** Continuous food insecurity can result in chronic stress for children, impacting a child's development. Children experiencing food insecurity encounter impacts on psychosocial development, behavior, school outcomes, and more.³ When we ensure children have sustainable access to healthy food options through local food pantries, we support children in reaching their full potential. This bill would promote sustainable access to food and nutrition resources for families, ensuring children have access to nutritious foods that promote healthy development.

In closing, when families have access to local food and nutrition resources, we strengthen the foundations of families and communities to thrive. **We urge you to support continuation of the Food Pantry Assistance Grant Program by voting 'yes' on SB23-027.**

Sincerely,

Jillian Adams Fabricius, Deputy Director

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¹ Center for the Study of Social Policy. (n.d.) About Strengthening Families and the protective factors framework. Retrieved From: <https://cssp.org/our-work/projects/protective-factors-framework/>

² Gallegos, D., Eivers, A., Sondergeld, P., & Pattinson, C. (2021). Food Insecurity and Child Development: A State-of-the-Art Review. International journal of environmental research and public health, 18(17), 8990. Retrieved From: <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18178990>

³ Gallegos, D. et al. (footnote 2)



April 25, 2023

Dear Chair Michaelson Jenet and members of the Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee,

On behalf of Children's Hospital Colorado (Children's Colorado), the patients and families, and communities we serve, I am writing to respectfully ask for your vote in support of SB23-027 Food Pantry Assistance Grant Program, that will continue Colorado's successful Food Pantry Assistance Grant program and assist in addressing food security that impacts the health and well-being of children and families across Colorado.

Children's Hospital Colorado is proud to partner with the community to advocate for the health and well-being of kids and families. Our work goes beyond our hospital walls and into the communities we support. In addition to our patient care, Children's Hospital Colorado supports families by providing care coordination, advocacy and facilitating access to community programs and resources. We are also committed to the philosophy that nutrition is a vital element of medical care, and we are dedicated to ensuring all children and families have easily accessible, affordable and nutritious foods for optimal health and well-being. Through our Resource Connect model, we developed a multifaceted Food as Medicine initiative where our clinical providers work to provide services that will ensure all children and families have easily accessible, affordable and nutritious foods for optimal health and well-being. We operate a Healthy Roots Food Clinic, providing nutritious groceries and education for more than 2,800 people last year.

In many communities across Colorado, food insecurity was only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Hunger Free Colorado reported in April 2021 that 16% of Colorado children were not getting adequate nutrition. Within Children's Colorado's own primary care patient population located in our Child Health Pavilion nearly 6% of families self-reported food insecurity in 2021.

We also are acutely aware of the impact of the changing policy landscape on patients and their families when the federal emergency Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits ended in February 2023. With this new change, an estimated 290,000 SNAP households have seen a reduction in monthly benefits as they return to the pre-pandemic amount. Food pantries also continue to report two to six times the number of community members coming to them for assistance.

These SNAP cutbacks, rising food costs, and number of families experiencing food insecurity mean that our state's food pantries and food banks are needed now more than ever. SB23-027 will continue to authorize this crucial program for several years. It is important our food pantries have consistency in funding to continue this important program that helps pantries get food their community wants, helps families get healthy food they need, and helps strengthen Colorado's food systems.

Thank you for your continued support of the health and wellbeing of Colorado kids. In this effort I encourage you to vote in favor of SB23-027 to support Colorado's Food Pantries and ensure Colorado children and families have access to food security.

Sincerely,

Ellen Stern
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April 25, 2023

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee my name is Lydia Waligorski I am the Director of Public Policy and Advocacy for Clayton Early Learning. We are here today in strong support of Senate bill 27.

Clayton early learning directly serves 500 of Denver's more than 7000 children birth to age 5, living below the poverty line as one of the largest head start providers in Colorado.

Clayton is home to the state's only [Educare](#) school, a national model for excellence in early childhood education driven by research and brought to life with highly qualified educators. Our whole child, whole family approach to early childhood is the basis for a full complement of wraparound supports and services that build strong families.

Nutrition impacts the way our brains develop and 90% of human brain development occurs before age 5 so equitable access to nutritious foods is essentially for healthy growth in learning especially for our youngest children 99% of clayton's school children live at or below the federal poverty line making food insecurity too common for our families.

This challenge is not limited to our northeast and our neighborhood. On a statewide basis nearly one in seven Colorado kids may not know when or where they will get their next meal. Additionally, it is important to understand that nationwide one in four childcare providers are food insecure themselves and many rely on federal SNAP benefits to feed their own families. Clayton serves 1,000 nutritious meals daily, all freshly prepared from scratch in the Clayton kitchen, including our own organic baby food. We know 80% of the calories consumed by Clayton children during the school week are provided while in our care.

Through our innovative Clayton Cares Market, we are also helping to provide food security for our children when they are not in our care. Each week, our no-cost Clayton Cares Market provides our families with a wide variety of fresh and shelf-stable foods, household and school supplies, diapers and wipes, and more. This all happens in a welcoming environment that allows for a pleasant shopping experience and the simple dignity of choosing the groceries and items that best fit each family's individual and cultural preferences. Since opening in October 2021, through September 1, 2022, Clayton families have made 2,206 shopping visits to the Market and have received more than 52,000 pounds of food.

As has been mentioned in the testimony this year's need has only grown. With the reduction in federal SNAP benefits, our families are asking us to help them fill the gaps they've experienced. Senate bill 27 the Food Pantry Assistance Grant program will help programs across Colorado. We are fortunate to see these needed dollars at work in our communities. I ask for your support of Senate bill 27, and I thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

Lydia Waligorski
Director of Public Policy and Advocacy