

February 19, 2025

Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

The undersigned organizations urge you to **support SF 1412 (Kupec), a bill that appropriates \$5 million annually for a prepared meals grant program which would deliver an estimated 750,000 prepared meals each year to Minnesotans in need.** The prepared meals programs supported by this legislation would benefit Minnesotans who experience both food insecurity and the inability to reliably cook for themselves, whether due to disability, chronic illness, limited mobility, a family crisis, and/or lack of access to a kitchen.

**There is a great need for the ongoing funding for a state prepared meals grant program included in this bill.** The program was funded as a pilot in 2023, receiving \$3.3 million in one-time funds. In total, 33 eligible applicants applied for \$21.6 million in funding, yet only eight organizations received any funding. When this funding disappears in June, many of these organizations will have to scale back or discontinue their programs.

This timing would be extremely unfortunate, as demand for prepared meals for food insecure individuals has grown considerably amid rising hunger rates in Minnesota. In 2024 alone, Fairview Health Services received 33,000 patients who screened positive for food insecurity. Second Harvest Heartland's Kitchen Coalition program distributed 1.32 million prepared meals using privately raised funds, but that served a fraction of our neighbors who needed them. Food banks and food shelves are working around the clock to address the dramatic and unsustainable increase in demand for food assistance, but they cannot do it alone. According to new data, **1 in 5 Minnesota families are experiencing food insecurity, with 15% expressing a need for the prepared meals supported by this bill.**

**Hunger is also a statewide challenge, with food insecurity rates at record highs and virtually identical across the state. Supporting SF 1412 (Kupec) would help provide an effective, tested, and transparent statewide response.** Appropriating ongoing, annual funding for the prepared meals program would help ensure tens of thousands of Minnesotans have the food they need, and we urge this Committee's support for it and other bipartisan, long-term solutions to ending hunger in our state.

Thank you,

[Organizations Undersigned]