

Food Insecurity

National Council of Jewish Women works to advance the well-being of children and families. We endorse and resolve to work for:

- Laws, policies and programs that provide a level of services and income that meet basic human needs while encouraging self-sufficiency.
- Equitable fiscal and tax policies that ensure sufficient revenues for basic human needs and economic security.
- Laws, policies, programs and services that promote wellness.
- Consumer protection laws that promote and enhance public health and welfare.

To effectively address food insecurity in Texas, NCJW supports:

❖ **Creating local, sustainable and accessible food systems**

- **NCJW supports SB 133 (Nelson)**, which would provide for the use of certain state property for community food gardens. Creating community gardens in local areas enhances both physical activity and food security with the tending and harvesting of local, fresh produce.
- **NCJW supports SB 403 (Zaffirni), SB 415 (Ellis) and HB 725 (Guillen)**, which would establish a loan program to help grocery stores and healthy corner stores located in food deserts. This could lead to the revitalization of these areas and provide access to healthier foods.

❖ **Increasing participation in the Summer Food Programs**

- **NCJW supports HB 749 (Raymond)**, which establishes a plan to increase participation in the summer food service program. Statewide, only 11% of children who receive free and reduced priced meals during the school year participate in the summer program. These programs provide children with one meal and many offer activities to help the children to continue to learn and grow when school is out.

❖ **Promoting policy solutions to increase nutrition and reduce/prevent obesity**

- **NCJW supports SB 376 (Lucio) and HB 296 (Rodriguez, E.)**, which require school districts where more than 80% of students qualify for free or reduced breakfast to provide free breakfast to each student during school hours.
- **NCJW supports HB 197 (Farias)**, which would authorize the creation of an obesity and wellness information portal on the comptroller's Internet website. This will help educate businesses and the public about the costs of obesity and provide resources for better health.

- **NCJW supports HB 128 (Raymond)**, which would enact a childhood health program grant (program) within the Department of Health & Safety to promote childhood health, fitness and obesity prevention.
- ❖ **Improving access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps) to prevent hunger and help Texas families afford a nutritious diet**
- **NCJW supports HB 587 (Burnan) and HB 1072 (Allen)**, which prevents the state from withdrawing SNAP benefits from eligible household members if one member becomes ineligible due to noncompliance with work requirements.
 - **NCJW opposes HB 161 (Larson)**, which deny benefits to an individual based on the results of a drug test. Efforts to link access to SNAP benefits to any assessment for drug-use, work requirements, or co-habitation would result in increased reliance upon unhealthful foods. Requiring drug testing for SNAP applicants will create new costs for the state and delays for the hungry.
 - **NCJW opposes HB 751 (Raymond), HB 948 (King, S.) and HB 1101 (Raymond)**, which restrict the purchase of sweetened beverages and/or foods with low nutritional value with SNAP benefits. Restricting foods available to SNAP recipients discourages retailers from accepting SNAP. This creates barriers to individuals who already need help. To encourage eating healthy food, legislators should make it easier to obtain and more affordable for all.

We know that our economic competitiveness and prosperity as a state depend on a healthy and well-educated workforce. Children must be well-nourished—in mind and body—to grow into productive and contributing members of our society. Unfortunately, too many Texas families struggle to afford a nutritious diet on a regular basis. “Family food insecurity,” means all family members at all times do not have access to enough food for an active, healthy life, including access to nutritionally sufficient and safe foods as well as the ability to acquire them. When people are food insecure, they may skip meals or cut back on the quality or quantity of food they buy. Over time, the recurring and involuntary lack of access to food can lead to malnutrition. Food insecurity and obesity are linked. Hunger drives the intake of unhealthful, high-caloric, empty calories for many, but especially for the poor. All of these problems have huge economic consequences for the state of Texas—costs that the entire community must bear.

Fifteen federal food assistance programs make up our national nutrition safety net and play a critical role in preventing hunger and improving nutrition in Texas. Most of these programs are federal-state partnerships, in which 100 percent of the funding and rules come from the federal level and the state has responsibility for implementation. Combined, they serve millions of low-income Texans and provide over \$7 billion in federal funding for Texas. Texas needs to keep moving forward in the fight against obesity and food insecurity. Look first to new revenue sources that offer a public health benefit and can reduce obesity-related costs to taxpayers before making program cuts, and continue to fund innovative programs to promote food security and obesity prevention.

02/13

For further information, contact: Marlene Cohen (972.733.1100; rockroad00@gmail.com) or Susan Pintchovski (512.454.9953; susan.pintchovski@gmail.com), NCJW State Policy Advocacy Network Co-Chairs.