



D.C. Hunger Solutions 2023 Year in Review

In 2023, Washington, D.C., continued to grapple with the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thousands of District residents faced a hunger cliff with the end of pandemic-era Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Emergency Allotments in March. Hunger remained a critical issue across the District. Nearly 10 percent of households were **facing food insecurity**, and food insecurity among older adults was at a staggering 13 percent, and D.C. Hunger Solutions is on the forefront, advocating for policy and permanent solutions to end hunger in the nation's capital.

Appointment of New DCHS Director



In September, D.C. Hunger Solutions named **LaMonika Jones** as the new director. Jones joined D.C. Hunger Solutions in 2021 as an anti-hunger program analyst focusing on Child Nutrition Programs. D.C. Hunger Solutions is excited about this new chapter and Jones' leadership and guidance.

Give SNAP a Raise

This year, the Give SNAP a Raise Amendment Act of 2022 was temporarily funded through certification of excess revenue by the District's chief financial officer. The amendment funding Give SNAP a Raise introduced by Councilmember Janese Lewis-George allocates \$39 million

to SNAP participants, as well as \$20 million for excluded workers. First introduced in 2022 by Councilmember Christina Henderson, the Give SNAP a Raise Amendment Act will supplement SNAP benefits at the local level by providing an additional 10 percent to a SNAP participant's maximum benefit amount. D.C. Hunger Solutions was instrumental in advocating for this legislation, providing testimony to the D.C. Council, working with community partners, and speaking with local media on the importance of strengthening SNAP for District residents.

Give SNAP a Raise will increase the maximum monthly SNAP benefit and will improve food security for individuals and families with low incomes in the District. The legislation also supports local, small, and large retailers, as SNAP has a proven record of stimulating the economy. This act is a tremendous step in allowing SNAP participants and excluded workers to maximize their benefits to purchase healthy food.

Universal School Meals

Universal School Meals is gaining momentum in the District. On January 13, Councilmembers Henderson, Parker, Nadeau, Gray, Pino, Frumin, Allen, and R. White introduced B25-0035, or the **Universal Free School Meals Amendment Act of 2023**, to the Council of the District of Columbia. The legislation would provide free universal school breakfast, lunch, and afterschool snacks to students in public, charter, and participating private schools in the District of Columbia. D.C. Hunger Solutions has long been a champion of free school meals. This year, D.C. Hunger Solutions formed a coalition of community members to advance universal school meals, provided testimony about the benefits of school meals, advocated for school meals with city officials, and released publications highlighting the importance of school meals.

Released in April, ***The District of Columbia's School Breakfast Scorecard for School Year 2021–2022*** found that less than half of D.C.'s schools reached the school breakfast participation goal of serving 70 percent of students school breakfast during the 2021–2022 academic year. Successful implementation of the School Breakfast Program is essential to children's health and academic success, yet far too many students are missing out. With universal school meals, all students can participate in school meals regardless of household income.



DCHS Anti-Hunger associates **Martha Assefa** and **Blake Turpin** provide applications assistance in the community.

D.C. Hunger Solutions 2023 Year in Review

Building off [the national momentum](#), D.C. Hunger Solutions continues working with the D.C. Council, local advocates, and community partners to make universal school meals a permanent reality across the District.

Hear the Crunch

In March, D.C. Hunger Solutions observed our annual Hear the Crunch advocacy day. Held during National School Breakfast Week in the first week of the month, Hear the Crunch highlights and amplifies the importance of school breakfast. This year marked the return of in-person classroom visits, and to commemorate the event, D.C. Hunger Solutions visited students and teachers at Langdon Elementary School.



DCHS celebrates Hear the Crunch 2023.

Still Minding the Grocery Gap

D.C. Hunger Solutions continues to analyze grocery store access and identify solutions to increase grocery store access for residents in the District. Our [Still Minding the Grocery Gap: A 2023 Update](#) found that there are still fewer grocery stores for residents living east of the Anacostia River.

Equitable access to grocery stores is critical for D.C. residents, especially those who participate in SNAP and WIC. Grocery stores are the primary locations for SNAP and WIC participants to use their benefits to purchase healthy, affordable food. The grocery store report was featured in a [DCist article](#) highlighting the concerns of residents living in Wards 7 and 8.

No Senior Hunger Omnibus Act

Washington, D.C., has one of the highest rates of food insecurity among older adults in the nation, at 13 percent. D.C. Hunger Solutions continued to advocate for addressing food insecurity among older adults by connecting them to available food services and federal nutrition programs.

Seniors are a vital part of our community. This legislation is a critical step in addressing the needs of one of our most vulnerable populations and ensuring they receive the assistance they need in accessing healthy and nutritious food.

As hunger remains a critical issue in Washington, D.C., D.C. Hunger Solutions remains steadfast in the fight against hunger.

Collaborating Star Award

At this year's Economic Mobility and Well-Being Conference, the American Public Human Services Association recognized D.C. Hunger Solutions and the D.C. Department of Human Services Economic Security Administration as recipients of the American Association of SNAP Directors Collaborating Star Award. This [award](#) recognized exceptional collaboration in addressing hunger and improving nutrition support services across the District of Columbia.

Advocacy Priorities in 2024

As we look ahead to 2024, we know that more work remains in the fight against hunger. D.C. Hunger Solutions will advocate locally for several pieces of legislation including:

1. permanent non-lapsing funding of Give SNAP a Raise
2. passing of Universal School Meals Amendment Act of 2023
3. increased SNAP participation among returning citizens, immigrants, older adults, college students, and LGBTQ+
4. adoption and implementation of Summer EBT (beginning summer 2024)
5. expanded funding for Food Access Fund and improved grocery store access

D.C. Hunger Solutions in the News

[LaMonika Jones Takes Charge as Director of D.C. Hunger Solutions to Combat Food Insecurity](#) — *The Washington Informer*, September 20, 2023

[Residents in Wards 7 and 8 Struggle With Food Insecurity Amid Grocery Store Shortage](#) — *The Washington Informer*, September 13, 2023

[How Heat Hits America's Hungry](#) — *Axios*, July 31, 2023

[Study: Access to Fresh Groceries Impacts Life-Expectancy](#) — *Fox 5 News*, July 6, 2023

[Lidl Opens in Columbia Heights, Grocery Gap Disparity Remains](#) — *DC News Now*, June 28, 2023

[D.C. Council to Consider New Free Proposal: School Lunch](#) — *The Washington Post*, January 19, 2023

Support our work to end hunger in our nation's capital by visiting www.dchunger.org/take-action/donate/.