

Good afternoon, Chairman Thomas and members of the House Agriculture Committee. My name is Elizabeth Pihlaja and I am the Operations Director of the Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota. I am providing written testimony on behalf of the Foundation in support of HB 1471.

This bill would create a food insecurity task force to develop a plan to address food insecurity in North Dakota.

The Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota believes that food insecurity and hunger are major barriers to full, healthy lives. While there are existing programs to support North Dakotans experiencing hunger, many families and individuals do not qualify for assistance and struggle with these expenses – especially with rising food prices. We know 1 in 12 children face hunger and nearly half of North Dakota households receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) support include children.<sup>1</sup> We also see that senior citizens, especially those that live with disability or live alone, struggle with hunger and food insecurity; furthermore, nearly half of North Dakotan seniors live in poverty, putting them at substantial risk for food insecurity.<sup>2</sup>

As North Dakotans, we take pride in our compassion for one another. We keep an eye out for folks in our communities. We love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Establishing a food insecurity task force would show a strong commitment to these “North Dakota Nice” values. Because of this, and the incredible importance of eliminating hunger in our state, the Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota urges a “Do Pass” vote on HB 1471.

Thank you for your time.

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## References

1. Feeding America. (2023). *Hunger in North Dakota*. Retrieved January 29, 2023, from <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/north-dakota>.
2. United Health Foundation. (2022). *Food Insecurity – 60+*. America’s Health Rankings. Retrieved February 8, 2023 from [https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/senior/measure/food\\_insecurity\\_state/ND](https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/senior/measure/food_insecurity_state/ND).