

Good morning, Chairman Thomas and members of the Ag Committee, I am Melissa Sobolik the CEO of the Great Plains Food Bank. And I'm here to support HB 1471, the creation of a Food Insecurity task Force.

The Great Plains Food Bank serves as the state's only food bank and the largest hunger relief organization in ND. Our role in the hunger relief pipeline is unique. Our traditional role is to recover surplus food that would go to waste and get it into the hands of those who need it. We identify that product, bring it into our warehouse, put it on an online shopping list and nearly 200 food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters in every county order the product and we deliver it to their door every month. We also fill the gaps in service with our innovative, direct service programs like the Mobile Food Pantry, Backpack Program or Senior Food Pack Program.

Last year alone we distributed 10 million meals to 1 in 6 North Dakotans through this strong and diverse charitable hunger relief network. That's over 138,000 of our neighbors who needed food assistance last year; the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest year in our organization's 40 year history.

Our mission is to **End Hunger Together** and our vision is a hunger-free North Dakota. We have an audacious goal to cut the food insecurity rate in North Dakota from its current 7.7% to 5% by 2030. We have a robust strategic plan made of 3 bold pillars to help us achieve that; **Ending Hunger TODAY, Ending Hunger TOMORROW** and **Ending Hunger FOR GOOD**.

As the largest hunger relief organization in the state, we partner with 200 other hunger relief organizations, founded and lead the Creating a Hunger Free North Dakota Coalition and the Cass Clay Hunger Coalition, hold the state's SNAP outreach contract, and have the honor to serve over 138,000 North Dakotans. Our strategic plan, goal, vision and mission are intricately linked to the proposed work of the Food Insecurity Task Force.

We applaud and support HB 1471. If we have learned anything, it's that we as a food bank alone, we won't food bank our way out of hunger. Our charitable hunger relief network alone won't solve hunger. It takes a movement of people, organizations, public and private entities working in concert with each other to end hunger. And we'll only accomplish it together. And this Food Insecurity Task Force is an important first step.

The Great Plains Food Bank offers our service, expertise and knowledge to help advance the proposed task force. Instead of re-creating a plan or efforts to end hunger

in ND, we welcome the opportunity to share our work plan, built on local and state data, national best practices and guided by the input of those we serve.

I hope you'll vote favorably on creating a Statewide Food Insecurity Taskforce that will be a big, bold step forward in helping to end hunger in North Dakota.

Thank you.