

**Statement of Rep. Ed Perlmutter
Hunger Roundtable Record
House Rules Committee
April 5, 2022**

When considering the challenges a family can face, putting food on the table is one of the foundational building blocks towards economic stability, health, and a quality education for children. And I've championed numerous programs during my time in Congress like WIC, SNAP, TEFAP, CSFP, and Meals on Wheels to ensure my constituents have access to nutritious meals to prevent needless hunger.

What I've learned from the House Rules Committee's Hunger Roundtable series is all these programs are not enough on their own. As of April 2021, 33% of Coloradans lacked reliable access to nutritious food and 20% of adults reported having to regularly cut back or skip meals because there wasn't enough money to buy food. Colorado households led by single women with children have among the highest rates of food insecurity with nearly one in three struggling to put food on the table before the COVID-19 pandemic according to the USDA. The U.S. consistently ranks as having among the highest rates of food insecurity of any wealthy, developed country and that needs to change.

Although COVID-19 severely exacerbated the hunger crisis, it didn't create it. We did, however, learn when Congress provided federal aid, we lifted families out of poverty and got them the food they needed. However, when Congress let the aid expire, the challenges began to rise again. Throughout the pandemic, there were increases in food stamps and unemployment benefits, three rounds of economic impact payments, universal free meals at school, and new grocery benefits. The pandemic showed us how to slash hunger in America and offered us a once-in-a-generation chance to rethink critical safety net programs, in some cases changing or expanding them in ways that were previously politically impossible. Ending food insecurity isn't just a matter of charity – the status quo is expensive. Food insecurity and hunger costs about \$160 billion per year in the U.S. according to one estimate from lost productivity and increased healthcare costs.

When President Richard Nixon convened the White House Conference on Hunger in 1969, he said, "That hunger and malnutrition should persist in a land such as ours is embarrassing and intolerable." I couldn't agree more. I'm proud of the work of the House Rules Committee under Chairman Jim McGovern's leadership to convene the long overdue second White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health. Through the Rules Committee's efforts over the last year, it's become clear to me there is no one single solution to ending hunger. What we need is a systematic approach to give individuals and families the tools they need to succeed in the 21st Century. We need this White House Conference to address why people are hungry in America and how we update and restructure our food, housing, healthcare, job and many other assistance programs to meet the needs of today.

I'm proud of the work led by Chairman McGovern to convene Rules Committee Members and learn about the problems in communities across the country, how innovative organizations are helping solve difficult challenges, and begin discussing how the federal government can work together across all our agencies to finally end hunger in America.