

**Written Testimony**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Agriculture**  
**Subcommittee on Nutrition**  
**Wednesday, December 8, 2021**

Chairwoman Hayes and Members of the Nutrition Subcommittee,

My name is Frank Kubik. I am the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) Director at Focus: HOPE in Detroit, Michigan and I am also a board member of the National CSFP Association. Thank you for the invitation to speak about CSFP here today. I am grateful for the opportunity to share the efforts and effects of the CSFP over the past two years.

CSFP has a long history of supporting our senior population by providing regular access to food items that supplement a healthy diet for seniors. The monthly food boxes provide a variety of items that can be incorporated into meals throughout a given month, reducing out of pocket food costs, and allowing senior income to be used for other food, medicine, or personal and household needs.

I want to thank this subcommittee for improvements to the certification process for CSFP in the last Farm Bill. Extending the certification period for our senior participants from one year to three years resulted in easing the paperwork burden on program operators. More importantly, it allows senior participants, whose financial situation is not likely to change significantly, to stay enrolled on this important program while they need it the most. We are hopeful that the next Farm Bill will address the issue of allowing seniors to receive the program services while they may currently be ineligible but still in need of CSFP. Removing the Medicare deduction from a senior's income determination is one idea that we are looking at.

CSFP provides more than just food. Our distributions provide information on healthy meal planning and lifestyle choices. Where possible, some offer health screenings, cooking demonstrations, tax assistance, utility assistance, and even access to other food programs such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). CSFP distributions provide social interaction and connection for seniors 60 years of age or older, providing comfort in the face of need.

My comments today are mostly representative of the experiences and efforts in Michigan, with some additional awareness of national efforts from my role as a member of the National CSFP Association. These past two years have been challenging, not only for our participants, but for the staff and volunteers who run CSFP. Normal practices had to be quickly set aside in the face of the pandemic to protect those most susceptible. Stay at home orders, social distancing, and personal protection for essential workers combined to help keep us safe but forced our agencies to revamp many of their distribution practices for the safety of all involved.

The practice of participants entering a building to stand and wait in line for food was replaced by drive through distribution of boxes at many sites. Agencies set up social distancing areas and used personal protection equipment and drive through pick-up to allow participants to stay safe in their cars. Some put up tents in their parking lots to keep staff and volunteers out of the elements. Others added or expanded delivery programs. They continued and expanded the use of proxies for food box pick up, allowing seniors to stay home. They used automated calling services to announce closures and

rescheduled distributions. They used phone apps and signage to keep the lines moving. Some agencies used a third party, such as Amazon, to help deliver boxes to seniors who were homebound. And while these efforts kept distributions going, there were areas beyond their control that limited program operations.

At times, some agencies had to close down due to quarantine and outbreaks. Stay at home orders kept participants away from distribution sites. New Covid variants, personal safety concerns, and lack of personal transportation continue to limit participation. The availability of CSFP food items decreased. Canned fruit and vegetables due to packaging material shortages, and Ultra High Temperature (UHT) fluid milk due to increase prices in the commercial food market, resulted in reduced food packages for extended periods of time, continuing still today for canned fruits and vegetables as national inventories continue to be replaced and built up to previous levels.

CSFP became available in all 50 states in 2019, as well as in six Federally recognized Tribes and Puerto Rico. National program caseload has remained the same since 2019, with caseload adjustments made between regions and states to support distribution trends. We are working to maintain distribution levels and expect higher participation rates as the pandemic subsides and participant levels rise as previous participants return and new participants join to become active participants. In addition, beyond the effects of the pandemic, the population of potentially eligible CSFP participants is projected to grow as baby boomers age into the required age bracket.

While additional food program support was much needed over the past two years, programs such as CARES, Families First, Covid Supplemental, Farmers to Families, and others provided alternatives to CSFP participants that may have been more accessible at times. Those programs provided temporary support and have ended or transitioned into other programs, and CSFP is working back to full packages for distribution as participants both old and new seek food support moving forward. States and partner agencies had the benefit of maintaining CSFP caseload and funding last year and would benefit from the same opportunity moving forward as the program and participation stabilize.

Thank you again for the chance to share with you today.