



**National Commission on Hunger Public Hearing
Invited Testimony**

May 19, 2015 ♦ 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Statehouse Convention Center
101 E Markham Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

Commissioner: Good morning, everyone and welcome to the Little Rock Arkansas field hearing of the National Commission on Hunger. My name is Mariana Chilton. I'm going to tell you a little bit about the, I'm the Co-Chair of the National Hunger Commission, along with Robert Doar. I'll tell you a little bit about the Commission and each of us will introduce ourselves and then we'll, I'll explain what the processes are for today's testimonies and we'll go on from there. The National Commission is a bipartisan commission appointed by members of Congress. We are, we number in ten. We have ten of us on the Commission. There are four of us here today but we are representing the entire Commission. Yesterday we, well, this bipartisan Commission is tasked with addressing food insecurity and hunger in America with a focus on the existing programs that are in place to address hunger and to seek out innovative solutions that incorporate faith-based partnerships, cross-collaboration, and public and private partnerships. We're very delighted to be here in Little Rock. We are going across the country to hear from people who are on the ground, who are working to address food insecurity and hunger in their communities and we have been to Albany. Now we're in Little Rock. We're headed to El Paso, Texas to New Mexico, California, Maine, and Washington, DC. Yesterday we did some field visits. It was a really incredible experience. We saw a number of things that are happening in Little Rock and in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. So some of our questions may be tempered by those experiences that we had. That is all I think I should say at this time. [laughter] Robert, do you want to add anything?

Commissioner: No, I just want to say how happy we are to be here and thank all of the lovely people of Little Rock and Pine Bluff and Arkansas that welcomed us so warmly and I'm looking forward to receiving the testimony that we've got on plan for today.

Commissioner: Billy, did you want to say a few words?

Commissioner: Just a word of welcome, thank you all for being here. I'm Billy Shore. I'm the founder and CEO of an organization in Washington called Share Our Strength. I've been to Arkansas quite a few times over the last couple years. Thanks to my dear friend, Harriett, who was with Governor Bebe's office and was a, just an incredible champion for our work. It's great to see you here and I know that so many people in



this room, some of whom I know well, some of whom I've just gotten to know, do really heroic work in this community. We had an opportunity to bear witness to it yesterday and in previous trips, and I think one of the things that most of us believe is that however you define hunger in America, it's a solvable problem, given the scope of all the problems that we face in this country and around the world. This is one that we should be able to solve and that it's, that the solution to it is also related to the solution to other things we care about, education and health care and economic competitiveness. So we're hoping that this Commission will learn more today that will enable us to bring a sense of new ideas and urgency back to Congress when we report in October.

Commissioner: Thank you, Billy.

Commissioner: I'm Susan Finn. I have a little laryngitis, but I am a member of the Commission. I come from Columbus, OH, and I represent the Academy of Nutrition Dietetics. We are a large organization of dietician/nutritionists and we are concerned about hunger, want solutions, as well, that is said by my colleagues but we also care about the nutritional quality of the diet, and so all of those things will be things that we will be considering as we go forward. Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you very much, Dr. Finn. So just a couple of housekeeping items: the bathrooms are a long way down the hallway, that way. This, oh, there's one right here, just right out the corner. I was misinformed. This entire day with the National Commission on Hunger will be audio recorded, transcribed, and made available on our website. So it will be available to the public. We are all being recorded here. This morning will consist of invited testimonies that the Commission on Hunger invited specific people to give their expert testimony in the morning and then between 1:00 and 3:00 it's an open testimony. Anyone who feels so moved can sign up to testify. Where can they sign up? There's a table outside where you can sign up, so if you're here as a member of the public this morning and you are wanting to add more to the dialogue and to the conversation, please, do sign up and tweet out to your friends that they ought to come for the public testimony portion from 1:00 to 3:00. This morning for our invited testimony, each expert testimony will, each person has 20 minutes total, 10 minutes for your formal testimony and then 10 minutes for the members of the Commission to ask questions and have a little bit of a dialogue with each of you. We have Andrea Anater from RTI who will be able to give each speaker and the Commission some warnings at the 3-minute mark, is that what it is?

Anater: And the 1-minute mark.



Commissioner: And a 1-minute mark and we will cut you off at a certain time because we do want to be able to ask you some questions and to learn more. Okay, have I left anything out?

Commissioner: No.



KATHY WEBB
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ARKANSAS HUNGER ALLIANCE

Commissioner: We do have a break built in at 10:20. I'd like to call forth our first witness, Kathy Webb, the Executive Director of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. Welcome Kathy. Also, if you have a written testimony that, you have extra copies of that testimony for us or no? Okay, thank you. It's not that important. As you come up, if you do have a written testimony and you want to share it with us, we'd be happy to look at it but as you, we do hope that if—

Commissioner: That's fine.

Commissioner: —we do hope that those of you who are testifying, if you have a written testimony, if you don't have it available at this moment, that you please do submit it to our staff at RTI so that we can observe it and also get it up on the website but again, if you don't have it written, it will be transcribed because we are being recorded. Kathy, welcome, thank you.

Webb: Good morning, thank you very much. As you said, my name is Kathy Webb and I appreciate your coming to Arkansas and the opportunity to speak briefly about hunger in Arkansas. For the last 3 years, I've had the privilege of serving as the executive director of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance and over the course of the 20-plus years prior to that, I was in the restaurant business in area management positions with two national chains and as an independent operator. During that time I became very interested in the issue of hunger and all of the ways it affects a person's life. I served on the boards of the Arkansas Food Bank and the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance and when I was elected to the Arkansas legislature in 2006, I cofounded the Arkansas Legislative Hunger Caucus. We were the first state to have such a caucus, and I'm proud of current legislators, like Representative Charlotte Vining Douglas, who continue to lead the fight to alleviate hunger. As the executive director of the Alliance, I see the breadth and depth of hunger throughout the state; in every zip code, it affects every age groups from seniors to working families to children.

The Alliance has been working to reduce food insecurity in Arkansas for 10 years. I think Dr. Craig Gundersen best expresses what we do in his *Five Ways to Alleviate Hunger*. We procure food for emergency food assistance to distribute through the states, Feeding America Food Bank Network. We provide SNAP outreach. We advocate for policies that benefit hungry Arkansans. We offer empowerment programs that help families learn financial management, and we work to promote other USDA programs. This morning I'll focus on our work connecting kids to other USDA programs that has been a core component of our programmatic work over the last few years. Our goal is to end childhood hunger statewide through the No Kid Hungry Campaign in partnership with Share Our



Strength. When we started the No Kid Hungry Campaign in 2010, we had the unenviable position of being ranked number one in childhood food insecurity. I think you know from yesterday that I'm a competitive person and there are a lot of lists that I want to be number one on but being home to the most hungry kids in the nation is not one of them. The No Kid Hungry Campaign is focused on breaking down barriers between the Federal Nutrition Programs and the kids they were meant to serve.

In 5 years, we have made tremendous progress. There are a lot of numbers behind our success, like the more than 400 schools who have made breakfast part of the school day due to grants and technical assistance we've provided. We've added 12,000 more kids who are eating school breakfast every single day. We have 7.7 million more afterschool meals served and more than 5,000 families have been empowered to shop smarter and cook healthier through hands-on nutrition education. Each of these numbers has taken a lot of work and the key to being successful has been an incredibly strong public/private partnership between state agencies, legislators, the Governor's office, other nonprofits, and corporate partners like Tyson Food, Wal-Mart, and MidWest Dairy. Each organization who sits around the collaborating table is invested strongly in building a better future for our kids, but despite this deep investment, one particular area of challenge is making sure that hungry kids get the meals they need over the summer. For many kids, like my great-nephew, summer vacation means riding bikes, enjoying swimming, family vacations, and hanging out with friends, but for thousands of low-income kids and millions of low-income kids around the country, summer is the hungriest time of year.

When I ask an 8-year-old girl how she likes her meal and her response is, "I'm just happy to have a meal," I find that both heartbreaking and unacceptable. In Arkansas more than 294,000 children rely on free or reduced school meals during the school year to meet their nutritional needs. When the school year ends, these meals end as well. We've been working in Arkansas in unprecedented ways to combat summer hunger. We brought critical assistance and resources to the schools and community organizations that serve meals during the summer. We've collaborated with USDA, state agencies, nonprofits, and private investors to set goals, address barriers, and measure progress. We've put every idea to the test and every dollar to work trying a wide variety of new tactics to address summer hunger within the current federal rules and regulations. Some of these innovations include collaborative planning. We work closely with state agencies, developing common goals and coordinating efforts on the ground that allows us to help in the recruitment process, targeted-site and sponsor recruitment. We've invested resources and outreach capacity in areas with low program participation. Working through local champions to build relationships and test innovative strategies and small grants. To help overcome barriers that stop sites from serving more kids, we've provided grants to purchase coolers or small kitchen equipment, we saw some of that yesterday, to support mobile feeding and feeding more kids.



All of this work led to a huge win in the summer of 2013. Statewide, Arkansas sponsors served an additional 1.6 million meals; 1.6 million meals, that was the number one increase in the nation, not just in percentage but in raw numbers. Now that's a ranking to be proud of, but it's incremental success; it's not enough to meet the need. Three-fourths of low-income children across the state are still left without healthy meals provided through the summer because the law constrains the program in ways that prevent Arkansas and other states from meeting demand. Largest among these barriers is the congregate feeding requirement, which dictates that children must travel to a central location and eat their meals at a specific time in a specific setting. In some places this works great. Kids are able to gather and eat healthy meals in safe, interactive environment, like at Life Skills for Youth in southwest Little Rock, where they served over 25,000 breakfast and lunch meals last summer, but it doesn't work so well in other places, like a site in southwest Arkansas where 200 kids get summer meals but because of transportation costs 800 more who are eligible don't.

This one size fits all makes it extremely difficult to reach most hungry children in Arkansas, and I'd like to highlight quickly a few reasons why. First, poverty is spread to diverse locations. The same is true nationally. There's more suburban and rural poverty. The number of suburban poor is skyrocketing almost three times the pace of the growth of poverty in cities. Open summer meal sites are only available in areas of concentrated need where more than 50% of kids qualify for free or reduced lunch. That means [that] in Arkansas, more than 35,000 low-income kids miss out simply because they live in mixed-income communities. Second, it's often impossible for kids to get to sites. In rural Arkansas, sites are located usually in the closest town where there's a church or community center, but those towns can be 10 or 15 miles away from where a family might live. We witnessed this in Pine Bluff yesterday, where the congregate feeding requirement is limiting summer meal providers from reaching kids beyond their immediate neighborhoods. Third, sites close if kids are unable to come. Even when new sites came to underserved areas, the constraints around congregate feeding and the lack of transportation prevented many kids from accessing summer meals. As a result, often sites in rural Arkansas communities found it financially infeasible to stay open. Fourth, you've probably heard this before: meal providers face an incredible administrative burden. As a result of these barriers, only 22% of the eligible kids in the state are successfully getting the meals they need when school is out of session. That's unacceptable and it's time to improve the way we feed kids in the summertime. By connecting more kids to the food they need, we're building a smarter, stronger, healthier generation. Our goal is to end childhood hunger in Arkansas. We can but we need changes and improvements in the summer meals program to get the job done. Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you very much. Do you have some questions, Robert, Susan, Billy?



Commissioner: Kathy, thank you very much. It was a great testimony. The very low food security metric for the state of Arkansas that we were given by the staff showed that it has risen from 4.4% of Arkansans' households to 8.1% between 2000 and 2012. Now you described in your testimony a lot of activity that's taken place, both before 2012 [inaudible]. What, how do you feel on that metric given that you're a competitive person, you will do when the measurement comes out then in this fall? Do you think you're making progress on that metric?

Webb: I think we are making progress on that metric but as you know, there are so many different ways that people measure food insecurity, including low food insecurity and because we have almost 20% of the people in Arkansas who live below the federal poverty line, there are going to be some metrics that we're not going to be able to change. I think when we talk specifically about childhood hunger and we have targets for all of the different programs that we're participating in, we know that more kids will be less food insecure but that won't necessarily change some of the overall metrics that are reported out.

Commissioner: And what would be your explanation for why it rose so dramatically between 2000 and 2012?

Webb: I think the economic recession had a huge impact on that. I think we have more people working in low-paying jobs and having to choose between food and medicine, food and utilities and, you know, again, I think that goes back to the point that there are going to be tons of things that we can do to alleviate hunger that won't change a family's overall economic situation.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Kathy, I like very much your description of how you went about and how you go about planning your efforts and your collaboration with public-private partnerships. I'm curious what kind of role does the corporate sector play in your partnership?

Webb: Well, the corporate sector has played a huge role in our partnership and I think one of the most important things is more and more businesses have come to understand that workers are going to be better workers when they're not thinking about what is their next meal and they're not able to concentrate. And we are fortunate to have some major employers—

Commissioner: Yes, you do, you're lucky here.



Webb: —in Arkansas and both of those, two of the major employers that I referred to in the testimony have been very significant partners, not only in providing financial assistance, but when they go and talk to our federal lawmakers and when they have programs for other legislators, they can say things that make a different impact than a hunger relief organization does.

Commissioner: Right.

Webb: So that's why it's been an important partnership, not only in terms of the resources, but in what they say and the other benefit is that they can bring along other businesses because when they speak, often times other businesses listen very carefully.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Kathy, two questions related to your comments about summer and congregate feeding. One is the phenomenal 1.6 million meal increase, additional meals in 2013. If you could say a word about what was the secret sauce behind that, particularly what might be relevant and applicable to other places if they were trying to replicate Arkansas' leadership in that regard. And then second, on congregate feeding, I'd be interested in your thoughts on how we don't lose what some of us see as the benefits of congregate feeding while also opening it up so that rural areas and other areas can take advantage of it. How do you strike a balance between not losing the good things about congregate feeding but also creating other pathways for children to get summer meals?

Webb: I'll answer the second one first, and I think it's important to keep congregate feeding because as I mentioned, like Life Skills for Youth, you know, they're incredibly successful but I think we need to have more flexibility so we can serve areas that need to be served in different ways, where congregate feeding doesn't work and we, I gave you one example, but there are other examples that we could also provide. And now to go back to the first question, the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance sat down with representatives from the food banks, with representatives from other nonprofits, with elected officials, with representatives from the Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Department of Human Services and we looked at the maps and we saw where there were not enough summer sites to meet the needs and we saw where schools and areas that may have previously been eligible now cross that threshold and were eligible to do congregate feeding. And we mapped out a plan for the whole state, working in partnership with all of these agencies and the Governor's office to say, "We can do better. We can tackle this. If we have a coordinated strategic plan to make this happen," and I think to be successful, you've really got to have that collaborative effort, which is not always easy to do. It takes time to work collaboratively and you've got to make the decision that we're going to tackle this issue, that we can solve it.



Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you very much for your testimony. I wanted to veer into another area of your expertise as a legislator. And I wanted to talk about [it] as a researcher who worked with very hard to reach populations. I did want to bring up a vulnerable group that really gets attention and discussion. So I've been looking at the data on youth that run away, teenagers that run away, and there are only a few studies that can work with those teenagers and in a study from 2006, it's a little bit outdated. They were working with teens that had run away from home in the Midwest, in Iowa City, in Lincoln, NE, [and in] Des Moines, IA, and they found that a number of those runaways identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer, LGBT[Q] for short. And one-third of those adolescents that ran away from home reported food insecurity, and about one-quarter of them reported very low food security or something that was very similar to very low food security. So I was very glad to see, hear you talk about children that could come to the congregate feeding sites but I'm very concerned about these children that may not be touched by those feeding programs. And then for adults, there are other studies that show that adults that identify as LGBT[Q] are more likely to report food insecurity. As a legislator, as a former state representative, I'd like to ask you what is happening in Arkansas in terms of current legislation in relation to LBGT[Q] issues and rights. How the current legislation may have an impact on food insecurity rates in Arkansas. So that's sort of a two-tiered question. One is what do we do about the youth that are running away from home or that are homeless or at risk for homelessness? And secondly, how can we make sure that adults who identify as LGBT[Q] can be protected, especially in terms of food insecurity?

Webb: And I would guess that you asked that question because of the national publicity that Arkansas received—

Commissioner: Yes.

Webb: —in the recent legislative session with some of the bills that were introduced and subsequently passed. And as you also said, there is not a tremendous amount of data but because of some work that we have done at the Hunger Relief Alliance, we looked at a study that the Williams Institute did several years ago that confirms what you're saying, that that is a very underserved population and a very at-risk population. And with all of the news that there's been about this, we have had somebody who has reached out to us who runs a program in central Arkansas and we have met with this individual who has indeed told us that a significant number of kids run away because they're kicked out of their homes and they often have no places to go. They often do not want to go to government-type offices because they're afraid they're going to be discriminated against and so I think



that fear of discrimination further exacerbates the problem and makes them more vulnerable to food insecurity. And we know specific examples of adults who have reached out to us. As I mentioned, we do SNAP outreach and of adults who were in the LGBT[Q] community, who are underemployed and who are at risk of being fired and who do not want to go to county offices to apply for benefits to which they are entitled. So what we do as an organization and other organizations, also, we try to work to make sure those people feel comfortable and are signed up for the benefits for which they are eligible and, you know, I think that, as this has been more in the news, I think you'll see other organizations also working with that population to lower the food insecurity rates among that specific population.

Commissioner: Thank you very much. Our time is up. So thank you very much for your testimony.

Webb: Thank you.

Commissioner: We hope that the Commission can be in touch with you if we have further questions. We can keep open the dialogue. Thank you very much.



**ED NICHOLSON
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMUNITY
RELATION, TYSON FOODS INCORPORATED**

Commissioner: I'll call up the next witness; that would be Ed Nicholson, the Senior Director of Corporate Social Responsibility and Community Relation of Tyson Foods Incorporated. Welcome, thank you very much.

Nicholson: Thank you.

Commissioner: Can we make sure that he has his placard?

Nicholson: Who I am, right?

Commissioner: Just to remind me.

Commissioner: Just to remind us.

Commissioner: Should you lose—

Nicholson: I do have written testimony. I'm sorry I didn't bring extra copies but I'll make them available.

Commissioner: That sounds great, thank you very much.

Nicholson: Thanks for coming to Arkansas. It's an honor to have been invited here to spend some time with you discussing the issue of hunger and in the interest of clarity, I should state that what I have to say represents my personal perspective and not necessarily that of my employer, Tyson Foods. It is, however, informed by more than 15 years of leading strategic corporate support for hunger relief efforts. I'm not a professional hunger fighter but I have the honor and privilege of being associated with them every day and I'm humbled and inspired by the passion and the creativity and the selfless work of those directly involved in hunger relief, many of whom are here today represented on the panel and presenting to you.

Let me first, on behalf of my employer and 120,000 Tyson team members just say thanks to all who dedicate their lives to seeing that people don't go hungry. I'm not a professional hunger fighter but I am a professional communicator. For more than 20 years I've assisted in managing communications for a Fortune 100 Company, sometimes around extremely complex issues. So I do bring that skill set to the table and some of what I'll be discussing today is about how we communicate to reach awareness, consensus, and maybe ultimately solutions. Fifteen years ago, we at Tyson Foods began our support of hunger relief with the



idea that we can engage resources readily available and have an impact in the fight against hunger. We feed people. We produce food. And our primary products, protein, are always in great need by food banks and other emergency feeding operations. We're not a high margin business but we are able to provide some strategic funding support for hunger relief efforts. And finally, and I believe most importantly, in 2000 we had about 55,000 employees in around 60 United States communities. That number has grown to 120,000 employees in 115 communities today. We believed then, as we still do, that engaging our team members in their own communities is perhaps the most valuable contribution that we can make.

An interesting and concerning theme occurred as we began engaging our own people to get involved in local hunger relief efforts. All too often we heard, "Well, we understand that hunger's a national problem. We get it but when you look at our community, Springdale, Arkansas, Waterloo, Iowa, Pasco, Washington, Wilkesboro, North Carolina, yeah, it's not, it's not really such a big challenge," you know. And we all know that's not accurate no matter where you are. The implication was we have much more urgent local challenges to which we should direct our attention. So we began to wonder just how widespread this perception is around the United States because if we don't consider this a problem that's close to home, then we won't give it the urgency and resources that it might require to achieve solutions. So in 2011 we worked with FRAC, the Food Research and Action Center, to commission a nationwide survey to determine knowledge and perceptions and attitudes toward hunger in the United States, and the results were interesting and somewhat concerning. Two-thirds of the people surveyed believed hunger to be a serious national problem but the same percentage didn't perceive it as a serious issue in their own community.

So at Tyson Foods, we began to focus a lot of our involvement around creating awareness about food security. We created a campaign titled Know Hunger, K-n-o-w Hunger, with the belief that if we can help people and especially our own team members and employees to understand that their own communities are directly affected by food insecurity and that food insecurity has a direct impact on their lives then they'll be motivated to get involved and it's an approach that has worked in our own communities. We've seen some really good work being done by hunger advocates, also toward creating awareness. Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap and the focus localized work being done by No Kid Hungry provide just two great examples but we still have a long way to go. Last fall, we commissioned FRAC to repeat the survey and the results had not changed significantly, almost two-thirds of the respondents perceived hunger as a significant societal challenge, just one that is not so significant in their own community. We believe that we should all be striving for sustainable solutions that move people permanently out of food security and that's going to be complex and you all know that.



And kudos to the Commission for your work toward that direction, but we also recognize that meeting immediate needs is just as critical and we know that federal nutrition programs: SNAP, WIC, the Child Nutrition Program, represent the best and probably the only way to do this on a scalable basis. I'd like to point out in particular the great strides being made in child nutrition programs that feed kids at breakfast, particularly breakfast in the classroom, after school, and the summer, when they might not have access to school programs. Our friends at Share Our Strength have taken us to visit several sites where this activity occurs and their work never fails to impress. We see great enthusiasm from teachers and administrators and school food service management. Some of whom initially approached this work apprehensively about the benefits of these programs bring to their schools and their communities.

Now, a part of our Know Hunger Awareness Campaign is focused on helping our own stakeholders, internal stakeholders and folks in our community, understand that these federal nutrition programs are needed and important. We're concerned that the discussion of these programs, especially their funding, has become politically divisive at times. We're concerned that there seems to be an unwarranted amount of opinion that's, that there's widespread abuse and fraud and dependency, when we're told by people that we trust that that's far from the truth. When we discuss this issue with our friends who are hunger advocates, there seems to be a reluctance to create public conversation that directly and assertively refutes the perception of fraud for fear of giving credence to those making the accusations.

And, you know, we might suggest that this approach is counterproductive. Let me use an analogy from an issue that we've had to manage at Tyson Foods: animal well-being. Farmers who grow livestock used in our production have every reason to treat animals humanely. It makes good business sense and it's the right thing to do. Yet for years detractors of the meat industry have been able to bring isolated examples of inhumane treatment to the public's attention, creating the impression that we have systemic problems with [the] mistreatment of animals. And people on our side, who work with us, were hesitant to enter into public debate because we knew accusations of widespread abuse were unfounded and believe that being drawn into a debate would lend credibility to the accusers. We finally realized that the detractors had greater control of the conversation and if we're going to change perceptions, we need to be proactive. So we created a program called Farm Check, focused specifically on addressing well-being, created a system of on-farm third party auditing and an advisory board of third party animal well-being experts to consider animal husbandry issues and we committed resources to, into how animal husbandry could be continuously improved.

Most importantly, we began communicating about what we're doing and it's working. While we're not immune from criticism and never will be, we've proved that we have a shared value with those who are truly concerned about animal well-being. So we might



suggest a similar proactive approach could be taken as funding for federal nutrition programs comes up for debate. We know that there are already auditing programs in place. We might suggest advisory boards consisting of neutral, third-party experts. And finally, we know there's a great story to tell regarding the management of these programs. It might be time to start proactively telling that story and only when we do that can we more effectively control the conversation because the shared value on all sides of this debate is that every single dollar invested in federal nutrition programs should be committed to those who are truly in need. I'd like to close by applauding a trend being seen more and more across the country and that's true collaboration among the public, private and nonprofit sectors toward finding solutions to hunger. For the longest time, I believe we worked peripherally with each other, each striving toward our own worthy objectives, sometimes on parallel tracks but more recently, these sectors have begun to establish common goals, communicate and collaborate. The best example is the work being done here in Arkansas with No Kid Hungry, the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, the food banks, private partners and the resources which the state of Arkansas has brought to bear. There are measurable, positive results, which you've heard about already and we'll hear more about today. Our hats are off to those who have rolled up their sleeves and done the hard work to make great strides in the fight against hunger. Thank you, again, for the invitation to be here and we appreciate you allowing us to provide our perspective.

Commissioner: Thank you very much.

Commissioner: I have a question.

Nicholson: Sure.

Commissioner: I applaud your efforts at Tyson. I'm well aware of you and what you've done, by the way, I agree with animal management efforts, as well. We need more of those kind of discussions. What do you do, I believe the private sector has, my view, the private sector has an important role to play here, how do we get more of you around the country?

Nicholson: Yeah, I think one of the things that we've managed to do inside our company is build a business case for this involvement and it's not something, we don't just write a check because it's, the resources that we utilize to continue to stay involved come from corporate dollars, not foundation dollars and we go back to the shareholders and ask them for it every year.

Commissioner: I understand.

Nicholson: And so thanks to really a lot of credit goes to our friends at Share Our Strength, who have the attitude, the very first partner that we had that you can do well by doing good



and so when you can build in objectives where the company wins and you do some good across those causes then I think then you can continue to keep people involved, companies involved even when there might be business challenges and then that's been true for us for 15 years, obviously, we've gone through ups and downs during that time period.

Commissioner: Sure.

Nicholson: And it became evident to us fairly early in that process of our being involved that this was good for our company to be involved.

Commissioner: Do you reach out to other companies to engage them?

Nicholson: We have at times but, you know, we've, obviously, we communicate and collaborate when possible with other companies that are already involved in the issue of hunger and if asked, we certainly will, and as Kathy mentioned we would at times communicate with other stakeholders. We've not included elected officials.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: If I could take Susan's question just even drilled down one layer deeper, Ed, specifically on legislative issues. You mentioned the Child Nutrition Reauthorization, which will be hugely important for a lot of the programs that are being discussed today and you talked about it in very positive ways. The voice of the business community is often not at the table on legislative and advocacy issues. You tend to see a lot of businesses that are more focused philanthropically than community engagement.

Commissioner: Yeah.

Commissioner: But do you have any recommendations on how other businesses or ways to get other business leaders to be willing to speak out on legislative issues, as well, and policy issues?

Nicholson: Involved in advocacy? Yeah, it can be challenging. It's complex, obviously, you know. Typically businesses, you know, go to elected officials with their own objectives, as well as those that were aligned with, so it can be a challenge, just quite honestly but I would say again, having people from both, having elected officials from both sides of the aisle communicate and collaborate with those elected officials, with those community, I'm sorry, with those company representatives might help. Helping them understand that their political liability, you know, might be mitigated somewhat by folks from both sides of the aisle.



Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you. Did you have a question? I was very touched by your analogy of the, not being able to, feeling as if you want to stay out of the debate, for instance, on waste, fraud, and abuse in SNAP benefits.

Nicholson: Yeah.

Commissioner: And you talked about how important it is to recognize the shared values among people who may have differing points of view. Can you talk about what might be the shared values between those who talk about waste, fraud, and abuse—

Nicholson: Right.

Commissioner: —and those who are trying to protect the programs and recognize how helpful they are to address food insecurity?

Nicholson: I think nobody wants to see people go hungry and there are differing approaches to how the solution to that might occur but the shared value is that, you know, most folks aren't heartless. They don't want to see hungry folks. They just want, you know, they have different a view as to how that might occur and especially when it comes to kids. That's, you know, that's the easiest one to tackle from both sides, all ideologies. So I think if we can start from that point, by saying, you know, we don't want to see people going hungry, you know. We know that there should be resources allocated to that and so let's figure out together how they're most effectively allocated and then if we need more, let's apply more.

Commissioner: Thank you very much. Are there any other questions?

Commissioner: Thanks very much.

Commissioner: Thank you very much for coming. I appreciate it.



**RHONDA SANDERS
CEO, ARKANSAS FOOD BANK**

Commissioner: Do you want to call Rhonda Sanders?

Commissioner: Sure, our next witness is Rhonda Sanders, the CEO of the Arkansas Food Bank.

Sanders: I do have a partially written—

Commissioner: Okay.

Sanders: —I will send it to you. I'll do it today.

Commissioner: Sure.

Sanders: I am providing you with some handouts that I want to refer to during my conversation.

Commissioner: Okay.

Sanders: First of all, I'm Rhonda Sanders, as you know, and I'm CEO of the Arkansas Food Bank. I've had the pleasure of working in this state for many years in numerous different capacities, including the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance as their executive director for 4 years, where I first met Billy and the No Kid Hungry Campaign. I also like to caveat any time that I speak that I'm also an elected official with my school board in my local community in Bryant. So I think it provides me an opportunity to see many different angles and many different sides of what we deal with in our state. I am proud to say that my school district is one of the ones that is doing school breakfast in all of their classrooms and in all of their schools. So Kathy and them have done a wonderful job of educating and working with our districts and really providing opportunities for students to be ready to learn when they get to school. I really want to thank you for spending the time that you did yesterday in seeing our state and seeing the things that we deal with in getting a bird's eye, upfront, hands on view of what our struggle is in Arkansas with food insecurity. I want to tell you a little bit about the Arkansas Food Bank and then talk with you about some of the areas that we're specifically targeting. We're one of five Feeding America Food Banks in the state and if you'll look at your map that I provided you, you'll see that we have five Feeding America Food Banks, some partner distribution organizations that help us cover the entire state. When you look over to that far right hand area, you see yesterday you were in Jefferson County. Those are the areas that are in the delta, go all the way up that eastern side of our state and you got a firsthand view of what it looks like in the delta. You'll also notice that in north central Arkansas, and when you see the other map with the density, you'll find out



that it is a low populated area and it also struggles with people that, while they're not in the rich farmland of the delta, they're often in mountainous areas that are very difficult to access and difficult to get to. I would like for my fellow food bankers to just raise their hands in the crowd, so that you'll see them because I know not all of them are going to be able to speak to you today. I appreciate them coming, appreciate them being here and sharing what they're going to share with you about their individual food banks. The Food Bank of, the Arkansas Food Bank utilizes approximately 300 local agencies and we serve 33 counties. The majority of those counties are delta counties. They're in central and southern Arkansas. There are other food bank partners in the state, also, besides the Feeding America Food Banks. Project Hope is located in Garland County in Hot Springs and the Arkansas Rice Depot provides food through the majority of the state. Both of those organizations are partners with us and we look at new and better ways to partner all the time because we feel like feeding hungry people is important to do.

The core mission of the Arkansas Food Bank is actually to acquire, store, and distribute food and other resources to hungry people. In our last year of 2014 we provided 21, 22.4 million pounds of food in our 33 counties. Of that 22 million pounds, 20 million pounds of it went directly to the agencies like you saw yesterday. That equates to around 18 million meals that were able to be provided to people. The other 1.5 million pounds of food, we worked with our fellow food banks and distributed to them so they could also use it in the work that they do. 80% of this food came through donated sources, that would be through either Feeding America, local manufacturers, retail store pickup from Wal-Mart, Krogers, Harp's, things like that. Only about 7% of that food came from government sources. The other 12%, 13% was purchased through donations that we received. So clearly, food banking is a partnership of corporate individuals, public entities, and everyone trying to be a piece of the puzzle to help hungry people. We served over 273,000 people just in our 33 counties last year. Out of that 273,000 people about 33% of them were children, about 11% of them were elderly and then it ran the gamut in between. So even with all the work we've done, we still suffer from high food insecurity.

So we've targeted three main areas of the food bank that we want to work and I just want to tell you a little bit about each one of them. First I want to talk about nutrition value. Food banking for many years was known for giving out maybe not the best food or the highest quality food, nutritious food, to those but, you know, throughout the nation that has really changed. And the trend now, I would love to get to where some of my fellow food banks throughout the nation, where they don't accept anything that's not nutritious but we have set a goal of acquiring more fresh produce. Out of that 22 million pounds about 4.5 million pounds of it was fresh produce, which you got to see some of that yesterday. We get that produce from all over the nation, pretty much the central part because transportation is very expensive, if we acquire it too far away but we also work with the Hunger Relief Alliance on a gleaning project, where we work with local farmers. Now last year we saw a little bit of a dip in what we received because last year was a terrible year for our farmers.



It rained all the way through July. We had record low temperatures that directly affects the produce that's available. So when you set those goals for acquiring that type of food for your clients, you have to kind of roll with the punches, just like the farmers do and we do that. And they're very gracious to us. They provide us almost 2 million pounds of food in our state, which is just phenomenal work from the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance in doing that. Arkansas, while it is an agriculture state, though, we have mostly soy beans and rice, and we export most of those. Fresh produce like we're trying to acquire is not a huge crop here. So we're always looking for ways to partner with our farmers to help develop markets any way that we can because we know that if they can grow more and sell more there will be more that they can obviously pass on to the food banks in a charitable capacity. So we recognize the benefits of those partnerships with our small farmers.

Arkansas is also one of the largest in the nation for senior hunger, 26.1%, I think it is, of our senior citizens struggle with food insecurity. We're doing targeted methods right now through our food pantries, trying to help them serve the senior citizens better. I wish there was school breakfast and school lunch for them but there isn't. So we use commodities. We use donated product. We're looking at ways to make the food pantries more accessible for them, buddy programs where someone can bring them, take the box of food to them, things of that nature, to help serve our senior citizens better. The third area is with our children. We serve approximately 70,000 children. We have done programs from school pantries to university/college pantries, a limited number of backpacks and we've also had summer feeding and afterschool sites. I want to touch just a little bit on the summer feeding sites, however, in closing. We have served as a sponsor and have approximately ten or more sites in our area. We have seen a change recently in how sites like to work. Many of them in the urban settings have trended towards purchasing the prepackaged boxes, things like that, which we think is great. It helps them with waste. It helps them with the USDA rules, all that but our rural areas are really struggling and I left the map with you for the density, for you to understand, we have many areas in our state that struggle with rurality.

When we go into a rural area like Montgomery County, for instance, they have 600 children that are food insecure, that most probably receive free and reduced lunch but to get to those 600 children is very difficult, especially if you have to do congregate feeding. Those 600 children live in an area that they may have to come 2 or 3 miles to get to a point. We looked at it very closely this year in applying for a grant and with congregate feeding in that county, even with establishing maybe two or three congregate sites, we were still only going to be able to reach 40 to 60 children out of that 600. My specific suggestion would possibly be to consider a waiver for states in areas that have this type situation that would allow them to do delivery. Maybe use the bus route. The children get to the bus stops, the meals can be provided. Now I absolutely agree the value of congregate feeding. You ensure that the child gets the meal. You can do enrichment, all of those things but there are times when that just doesn't work for our kids. So one of the takeaways, I hope, that you get from what I've shared with you is that there might be some options to congregate feeding and



you would consider it. We could have partnerships but schools don't open during the summer and they certainly don't run their bus routes. So it's just really a struggle in rural Arkansas. I just want to close and let you know that the food bank works closely with everyone in our community. We're not the sole answer to feeding people. I think Bread for the World released figures that says \$102.5 billion are spent through government sources on feeding people. Food banking about \$5.2 billion annually. That's a tremendous difference. We're willing and ready to step up our game. We'll step up and face the challenges. I don't feel like we can be the sole answer. We are a charitable system. We work diligently. We work hard. We work in partnership but there is value that is there from the other programs that help weave this tapestry that we're a part of and we just appreciate you taking the time to hear us and to see what we do.

Commissioner: Thank you very much.

Commissioner: Thank you, Rhonda. You know, being with you yesterday and Alzheimer gave such a palpable sense of the lifeline really that the food bank is for so many Arkansans who are struggling with food and as you were talking about congregate feeding and the gap between what food banks can do and what public policy can do, I'm interested in what kind of capacity you have to really be engaged in policy debates and in advocacy because it just seems to me that you are on the front lines and your colleagues, many of whom I met yesterday, some of them are here today, really closer to the people that we're all interested in serving than almost anybody. And so I think your voice can be so powerful but my guess is that the demands of the day-to-day work of the food bank are almost kind of preoccupying. So how do you develop the capacity so that policymakers can hear what you're witnessing?

Sanders: It can be very consuming and you can forget at times the role of advocacy. First of all, we're part of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance and Kathy and her staff do an excellent job of meeting and raising awareness and advocating but we also, as food banks, do a tremendous amount of work by inviting legislators into our buildings to see what we do. We encourage them to go to pantries. We try to make those connections with the local level so that legislators and local communities can go and see those very pantries. The Arkansas Food Bank has an advocacy council made up of local pantries and agencies that want to do that kind of work. So you do carve out time and as we raise money, we do often get grants that help us do that kind of work, help us have additional staff to do advocacy because it is a tremendously important role to let everyone know and let our legislators and our policymakers see at the local level what happens.

Commissioner: I wanted to ask you about summer feeding. When you talk about the children in the rural area that have a really difficult time getting to the congregate sites.



Sanders: Uh-huh [yes].

Commissioner: There has been a series of demonstration studies with, that the USDA has run where families who have children who are eligible for free breakfast and lunch can receive more money on their Electronic Benefits Transfer, their EBT card.

Sanders: Uh-huh [yes].

Chilton: Can you talk, and that the effectiveness of that has been shown to reduce very low food security by over 30%. Can you talk about what the possibilities are for implementing Summer EBT, that's the name of the program—

Sanders: Uh-huh [yes].

Commissioner: —in Arkansas and what your willingness to be involved in that type of effort would be?

Sanders: I have heard some of those reports and it was very encouraging and I think it could be a way to help bolster those families during the summer when they suddenly have kids at home that they don't normally have at home to have access to food. The real challenge often in the rural community is that there's not a grocery store close by and while I know it does help, you have to have some place to go to get the food and once again, often in a rural setting, a small grocery or a 7-11 or convenience store is very expensive. So I do think there is a possibility of that. I know it has been proven to provide additional access. I think you're still going to have barriers within the rural communities that you're going to have to address at the community level on how to get food available to them to use on those cards.

Commissioner: Thank you. I have, oh, go ahead, Susan.

Commissioner: Just one other comment, you mentioned seniors and it strikes me what a difficult situation that is and you have local churches that are big contributors and those are declining in some of the rural areas.

Sanders: Uh-huh [yes]. Yes.

Commissioner: The group yesterday, there were 45 members of that church doing that.

Sanders: Yes.



Commissioner: What do you project the future will look like?

Sanders: You know, I just hope that as a hunger advocate and someone feeding people that we can build that fire and that inspiration in our young people. I do think it is there. There's a lot of young people who want to work and help others. We get many of them coming as volunteers to the food bank. What we've got to do is encourage them and help them find ways locally to engage because so many of our volunteers are elderly and they are aging out of being to do that.

Commissioner: They are.

Sanders: And we are encouraging our food pantries to look at different hours, such as Saturdays and after hours, not only for the clients but for the volunteers because so many of the volunteers that might be interested at the local level, they're working or they're in school, things like that. So we're doing different things along those lines to encourage that interest.

Commissioner: I wanted to ask. I just want to also say thank you so much for allowing us in to view some of your programming.

Sanders: Sure.

Commissioner: It's been a tremendous opportunity for us. There was a moment yesterday when we were at the food pantry, I can't remember the name of the church but it was the small church, where the senior members were distributing food. It was very exciting.

Sanders: East Side, I think it is.

Commissioner: Thank you, yes, and there was a moment where one of the, a participant in that who knew about that food pantry came in and was hoping to get some food and was refused a basket or a box of food. And I think that may have something to do with the way that local food, the people who are running the local food bank need to somehow track or account for the number of people that come or the number of distributions. Can you talk about the context in which people are refused food by the food bank or by those members who are, people who are members of the food bank?

Sanders: That specific situation that I found about kind of afterwards, possibly should not have occurred but I will tell you that all of our pantries have to determine how many they can feed. They, and often times they do have to shut the doors when there's a line because they've handed out the 40 boxes that they have food for and if you're number 41 there may



not be the opportunity to put together a box or to do something. Most of our pantries will try to provide something but once again, many of them will take numbers and they know they have so many they can serve and once that number is done, they have to say, "I'm sorry. I'm out of food." And it does happen on a regular basis because once again, food is a consumable and we're doing everything we can to help them acquire the food that they need but when you're in a small community, especially a poorer community, they only have so many resources and that does happen to people and it is heartbreaking when you see it. The other things that occur at a food pantry, often they have to maybe limit, make the boxes smaller, if they don't, you know, have as much food. They don't have as many resources then they have to take away some of the food in order to make more boxes. So there's different coping mechanisms that our pantries have just as there's many different coping mechanisms that our individual clients have.

Commissioner: Thank you very much. Thank you so much for your testimony and again, thank you for hosting the Commission. We appreciate it.

Sanders: Thank you.



PATRICK CASEY
HARVEY AND BERNICE JONES PROFESSOR OF DEVELOPMENTAL PEDIATRICS,
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES, ARKANSAS CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL

Commissioner: Now I'd like to introduce Dr. Patrick Casey, the Harvey and Bernice Jones Professor of Developmental Pediatrics at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, the Arkansas Children's Hospital. Thank you very much. Those of you who are coming in and Dr. Casey, I'm not sure if you were here this morning. I just wanted to remind you that this testimony is being recorded and will be transcribed and be made available, you can have it, and will be made available to the public. You have 10 minutes for your testimony and then we'll have 10 minutes for question and answer. Thank you very much.

Casey: Thank you, Commissioners. I very much appreciate your allowing me the opportunity and privilege of discussing food insecurity and its consequences in our state and in our community and at our hospital. What we've done at Arkansas Children's Hospital to combat food insecurity and some ideas for you to consider in your ultimate recommendations. First, by way of background, I'd like to describe who I am and the world in which I work. I'm an academic pediatrician and I've worked at Arkansas Children's Hospital for 36 years. ACH is the only tertiary level children's hospital in Arkansas and is located in Little Rock, the geographic center of Arkansas. Through all my years at ACH, I've directed a referral clinic for preschool children with problems in growth, a condition we call failure to thrive. Over these years I have been involved in managing literally thousands of children with growth problems due to under-nutrition. I'm also a research pediatrician. My research interests are clinical and have focused on problem, on growth problems of preschool children, preterm children's growth, children with medical complexity, and the social determinants of children's health. Since 1998 I've been the Arkansas Principle Investigator of a multisite group of pediatric researchers, which we call Children's Health Watch. We've collected data during all those intervening years in the emergency departments of our respective hospitals in order to describe the prevalence of food insecurity and other household hardships, such as housing challenges. We assess the consequences of these social determinants on the health and well-being of the children and their households.

You can see that I have a relatively unique perspective to describe to you the challenges of food insecurity and its implications for children and their families. According to the USDA survey in 2013, about 20% of households with children in the United States reported food insecurity, while nearly 28% of Arkansas households with children reported food insecurity. This involves almost 200,000 Arkansas children. Let me bring this closer to home at Arkansas Children's Hospital. Since 1998 we've interviewed thousands of family with children under the age of 4 in our emergency department. For most of those years the



prevalence of food insecurity documented in these interviews was about 11% to 12%. However, in 2008 the year of the economic depression, this prevalence doubled up to 22% and it has not decreased significantly since. In 2013 23% of these families in our emergency department reported food insecurity. It goes without saying that households who struggle with the availability of food, likewise also struggle with the cost of housing and energy and gasoline for transportation and childcare. What about the consequences of food insecurity? Research over the last two decades has documented unequivocally that adults who live in households with food insecurity . . . [audio transitioned to new file, gap in recording]

The USDA is now attempting to introduce this into other hospitals. In a separate effort, our financial counselors were trained in the process of taking SNAP applications and over the years we have facilitated about 400 such applications. Under the leadership of the Arkansas State Health Department, a few months ago we opened a WIC office on our campus one day per week and we hope that this will expand to full-time in the near future. We've teamed up with the food pantry located down the street from the hospital and we offer bags of food when urgent needs are identified. We are working with that pantry to devise a traveling food pantry in a renovated school bus and will be starting a community garden with them this spring located on their grounds. We've provided five porches of cooking matters developed by Share Our Strength and we routinely provide grocery store tours and cooking matters at the store.

What recommendations would I make to the Commission to reduce food insecurity? I'd begin by suggesting that hospitals that care for children should consider some variation of what we've done here. They would need to develop partnerships and alliances with leaders of local anti-hunger organizations, food banks, and pantries and local or state or health or human service departments in order to develop steps that will work for them locally. In some cases greater flexibility from federal and state agencies which administer programs would facilitate their delivery at hospitals. But none of these steps will fix the problem of hunger. The solution lies in policy. From the big picture, we need to find ways to better educate and train adults for positions that pay adequately. In a state like ours it is unlikely that a poorly educated, poorly trained parent can go out and find a job with adequate income to fully support their family. As for those who work for minimum wage, we need to assure adequate SNAP benefit levels so that the low wage does not severely diminish their eligibility or benefits from SNAP. I would urge Congress to maintain and even expand SNAP and WIC eligibility and benefits along with school breakfast and lunch. Research by us at Children's Health Watch and by others has demonstrated the benefits of SNAP and WIC on the health and developmental academic well-being of children. We have come to think of these programs as prescriptions for healthier children. We need research on the adequacy of SNAP benefits in varying family context which relate to SNAP benefit levels. I'll remind you of the family I described earlier. The father's income made them ineligible for SNAP, thus resulting in household hunger, which resulted in significant health care costs. Cutting



these food assistance programs as being considered by Congress will result in the loss of too many meals for too many children every month. The loss of food to children if they cut these programs is real. I see this in the faces and the bodies of children that I treat. The cost of these nutrition programs would likely be offset by the savings that would result from federal expenditures including health and education.

I would also encourage the Congress to consider eliminating various barriers that family face in applying for federal assistance. Too often I hear from families that they have difficulty getting to the WIC office when it's open. At our hospital, our constables have to take two applications, one for Medicaid and the other for SNAP. Combining these would be of great help to our families. One last thought and one of particular relevance at Arkansas, any program that increases household income should be given priority. The Earned Income Tax Credit essentially subsidizes low wage workers' income by reducing the amount of taxes that low income families owe. Unfortunately, Arkansas doesn't take advantage of this important anti-poverty social policy. Would it be possible for Congress to do more to encourage states to take advantage of the EITC? I appreciate your giving me the opportunity to talk to you this morning. Clearly, my experience as a pediatrician caring for undernourished children over 36 years has driven my perspective on these issues. When our children go hungry we will all pay. Thanks again.

Commissioner: Thank you very much for your testimony. [applause]

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Mr. Doar?

Commissioner: Dr. Casey, thank you, by the way, for a lovely time yesterday and a tour of your hospital. You have a great institution there.

Casey: Thank you. Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you very much for all that. On the last comment about the Earned Income Tax Credit, that's a federal tax benefit that is available to all federal taxpayers in the country. What Arkansas must not have is a state EITC, which supplements and makes that benefit go a little bit further. We have that in New York and many other states have that but I'm sure the federal EITC does provide assistance to low wage workers in Arkansas through the program that exists at the federal level.

Casey: Thanks for the clarification.



Commissioner: Secondly, on your data, it looks to me that the very low food security number for the most recent year in Arkansas was 8.4%

Casey: That was the USDA survey.

Commissioner: Yes, and you in your testimony said that it was the highest of any state in the United States. That's what it says in the testimony.

Casey: Uh-huh [yes].

Commissioner: And that's at the most recent period, 2013, is that, I think that's correct?

Casey: That's the USDA data.

Commissioner: Then the other question I had to ask you about was I was very impressed by your program where you have basically sort of a summer feeding or a lunch feeding program for children who are on campus, who are in the hospital for some other reason, basically is who it serves and it looked to me like you prepare how many box lunches a day? It looked—

Casey: We give during the, during the school year about 150 to 200 lunches, during the summertime about 300.

Commissioner: What's the rate of, you prepare them, what's the rate of consumption?

Casey: Don't know that, we see the people sitting right next to the café there, if you saw that yesterday eating their lunch.

Commissioner: But I presume you probably base it on consumption, so you wouldn't make that much more than you need to make but the vast majority get consumed every day?

Casey: I would be sure that would be the case.

Commissioner: And then the last question is given the location of the hospital and its community role, have you considered, I know it is available should someone who's not on campus just decide to walk by or come in, I'm sure you wouldn't deny someone, a child, the boxed lunch but have you considered making it that more of a kind of a open to the public, regardless of whether they happen to be on campus type setting?



Casey: That's probably not feasible in a secure environment, you know. In today's world our hospital is very cautious—

Commissioner: Secured.

Casey: —about security and the coming and going of people into our hospital is monitored. So it's not feasible in today's world to open the hospital for folks to just come in for, if they're not there to see a medical provider.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Have you asked enough questions?

Commissioner: I'm done.

Commissioner: He asked four and I'm sure my colleagues—

Commissioner: Dr. Finn, carry on.

Commissioner: —all I can say is how lucky they are to have you in Arkansas.

Casey: Thank you.

Commissioner: And how do we get more of you in other, how do we get more leading pediatricians because you're a very distinguished professor and, and leader in academics?

Casey: Well, you know—

Commissioner: How do we get more of you?

Casey: —number one, nutrition in children is central to the—

Commissioner: You bet.

Casey: —mission of pediatricians.

Commissioner: You bet.

Casey: We train pediatricians in nutrition, at our hospital, for example, we have actually now started to screen for food insecurity. To take it to leadership levels is more challenging, you know. Our Academy of Pediatrics is extremely focused on nutrition, very



supportive to the nutrition acts and getting it refunded, you know, how to get more, I think is a challenging issue, though, for us because historically and traditionally, leaders in medicine and in pediatrics go into areas like the heart and the lungs and the kidneys, you know. That's where the academic track is, has been to really get into leadership positions. So this kind of work is somewhat nontraditional. There are core, there are hardcore of us that work together throughout Children's Health Watch.

Commissioner: Do you have an alliance through the Academy?

Casey: Yeah, yeah.

Commissioner: Do you?

Casey: Yeah.

Commissioner: Is it through the Nutrition Committee, the Academy?

Casey: Well, we do communicate up through the Academy to the Nutrition Committee and provide, you know, when I say, "We," I'm referring to the Children's Health Watch group and the data that we generate to try to give them information to utilize as they argue for supporting these programs.

Commissioner: Well, thank you very much.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Thanks, great to meet you yesterday. I had heard about your work from many parts of the country. I feel like I'm meeting one of Arkansas' great exports because you've got quite a following around the country.

Casey: Thank you.

Commissioner: One thing you said in particular that I was interested in when you talked about the importance of better educating and training adults. Ed Nicholson, in his testimony earlier, talked about this commonality that we all have about caring about children and I think one of the things that we wrestle with a lot, we talk a lot about in my own organization, Share [Our] Strength with the No Kid Hungry Campaign is the degree to which you can't support and protect kids without also impacting the adults who care for them or need to care for them. And I'm just wondering if you could say a little bit more about how we ought to think about



striking that balance between focusing on kids, which you obviously do at Children's Hospital but also making sure that their parents or their providers are taken care of?

Casey: Well, I would kind of refer back to the data that's in the report, how households with food insecurity have so many other challenges, housing, paying for medical care. There was a report this week that I'm sure you heard about that families over the last year, who reported, who purchased healthcare insurance, 25% are having to forgo health care because they don't have enough money to pay for everything. So households who have food challenges have many other challenges and I think we need to attend to those. This is not just a food issue. This is an issue of pretty much every aspect of a household and this whole issue runs with poverty and people who are on the edge of poverty, in and out of poverty and until our country can find a way to help parents be educated and trained and get well-paying jobs, it's difficult to know how poverty's going to go away and so in the meantime, dealing with specific issues like housing and energy and food, I think are just really critical.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Dr. Casey, thank you very much for your testimony. I wanted to ask you about, you so eloquently spoke about the impact of food insecurity on the health and well-being of children and their caregivers and the health care costs associated with food insecurity. As a Commission, we are meant to make recommendations to Congress and of course, our budget, the national budget, is on the mind and how much money we spend on our Nutrition Assistance Programs and there is some talk about the tremendous health care cost savings that would be made available should we improve food security but there's some disagreement on the Commission about that. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit more about health care costs associated with food insecurity and whether we ought to be paying attention to those costs.

Casey: Well, I'll reference the child that I described. That child who we saw days of 12 months had been in the hospital two times for the term we call failure to thrive. You could imagine those bills would probably be \$20,000 just right there for those two hospitalizations. I don't have the figures but there has been work done to document that the savings in health care from hospitalizations, primarily but also associated health care costs are substantive. I would also add the educational issues, you know, children in the early years of life, when their brains are rapidly developing, if they're undernourished, they have a much higher probability of needing special education or other supports in the academic setting and those are educational costs that could be averted were we able to do a better job with our preschool children.



Commissioner: Dr. Casey, again, thank you very much for hosting the Commission yesterday and I echo Dr. Finn's sentiments that Arkansas is very lucky to have you. Thank you very much. We are taking a break. We are coming back here at 10:40.



ERIC SAUNDERS
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OF FISCAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES, ARKANSAS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Commissioner: Those of you who have just joined us, I just wanted to remind you that this session is being recorded. It will be transcribed and made available to the public. Each of the people who provide testimony have 10 minutes uninterrupted and then 10 minutes of question and answer and dialogue. I'd like to introduce now Eric Saunders, the Assistant Commissioner of Fiscal and Administrative Services from the Arkansas Department of Education. Thank you very much for joining us.

Saunders: Thank you for having me. Good morning, Board. I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to be here this morning and representing the Department of Ed and I think many schools across the state that my background, to let you know I've been a teacher, a coach, a bus driver, principal, and superintendent at various schools in Arkansas. And so I've worn many hats and done many things and so I'm always trying to decide what I want to be when I grow up. So these experiences have given me a broad perspective on the lives of our students and the issues that many of them face. Many students have factors outside of school that may affect their performance in the classroom and other areas of their life. In the 2012/2013 school year, 60% of Arkansas students qualified for free or reduced lunches. This number represents more than 280,000 students. Many students, who do not have adequate food at home, exhibit behaviors that are telling of their situation. Many times these students will eat at a much slower pace by increasing the amount of time between bites or taking smaller bites of food. I've been told that this is the child's attempt to prolong and savor the moment. I have noticed this behavior most noticeably among younger elementary students. Among other students I have observed an increase in the amount of food eaten, as well as the type of food eaten on Mondays and Fridays, specifically. I believe the reasoning for this type of behavior is due to the lack of food they receive on the weekends. Not only are the students trying to fill an empty stomach on Monday, they are attempting to stock up on Friday for the weekend. Fridays also seem to be a time that students ate foods that were high in carbohydrates, such as bread and potato products. It would be natural to assume that this is done so that the students felt fuller for a longer period of time.

There are several resources and practices available to help combat hunger in our public schools. In districts where I have worked, there have been various programs such as the Arkansas Rice Depot's Backpack Program. I've seen how very beneficial this is, not only to the student but his or her family, as well. With this program students pick up a backpack full of food on Fridays and bring it back to be filled again for the next week. Another successful practice I've personally implemented is the use of alternate mealtimes. By alternate mealtimes I am simply referring to a time other than what is traditionally known as before school for the breakfast. Having alternate breakfast times to include the time



between class periods or simply later in the day helps to avoid the possibility of students skipping breakfast due to oversleeping or running short on time.

Serving breakfast in multiple locations is another successful practice I have observed. One reason I believe this is successful is because it is reflective of many business practices in society today that respond to consumers' here and now needs. While analyzing the success of this in one district, we observed students who were eligible for free lunches visiting multiple locations to receive additional meals. The cost of these meals were absorbed locally. What was shocking is that prior to this happening, I had assumed those students who had already eaten breakfast were no longer hungry. Unfortunately, that was not the case but thanks to implementing this practice, those students were getting more to eat. The grab-and-go style of serving breakfast is another practice that allows for the quick delivery of meals. While this may seem to reduce wait time for students, it also benefits schools as they are limited on the time they have to distribute meals. Having meals prepared and packaged in a way that all the student has to do is grab the meal, typically located in a bag or wrapper, helps to eliminate a possible hunger barrier, while providing the student with a healthy meal. Alternate location is another practice that is not difficult to implement.

While many people focus on the classroom as being an alternate location, other locations include outside or in the hallway. The only limitation here is to what a school can effectively manage. The before mentioned practices of alternate times, multiple locations, grab and go meals, and alternate locations can easily make healthy meals available to students. Not only do they have very little, if any, cost associated with them, school cafeterias are more efficient and cost effective when they can serve more meals. Implementing practices with minimal cost can actually produce revenue for a district. The role of schools has changed over the decades. Schools are now filling voids that were previously filled by families and communities. Key district leaders including school board members, superintendents, principals, and child nutrition directors must embrace best practices that increase student participation in the breakfast and lunch programs. As an educator, I have been charged with preparing students for the future and that means ensuring all students have the necessary resources to be successful. No child should be hungry. It takes a collaborative effort to ensure our students achieve their highest potential. Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you very much. Questions? [Applause]

Commissioner: I have a question. Deputy Commissioner, thank, or Assistant Commissioner, thank you for being here. This morning we visited an elementary school where they did breakfast in the classroom. It was wonderful. It looked spectacular in every way. Are there any fiscal implications of that for an elementary school in Arkansas?



Saunders: Implications, I think initiating a program like that, you initially have a start up cost and there are programs to provide for those costs. It's very minimal. Many times it involves the equipment just to deliver the meals, such as tubs, which you may have seen. It, and that, you know, depending upon the size of the school, varies on implementing that. I think you quickly get that back in the sense of increased participation in the breakfast program and so those costs are, come right back and I think even for a positive on the financial end, even though that would not be the reason for implementing it but that would be positive in that sense.

Commissioner: And then just a second question on breakfast. We saw it in the elementary school, kindergarten through, I think, third or fourth grade is what we saw. Is it a different situation when it's in the high school, breakfast in the classroom?

Commissioner: I was just going to ask that. He took my question. [laughter]

Saunders: It's a great question. Yes, but I think the fundamentals kind of remain the same and I think that as school leaders we have to get out of our traditional way of thinking and just think of things different. You know, I always joked that I thought that, you know, school started at 8:00, that a high school parking lot at 7:59 kind of looked like Wal-Mart on Black Friday. Everybody's coming in right then at once because it's teenagers, many of them driving themselves and because having the traditional before school time for breakfast, it eliminates that student eating breakfast, just because of the time barrier and many times it's not a barrier to do with resources at home. It's just simply a time barrier and so you also have other programs within schools, athletics, for example. Many times it's common to have athletics during a first period program and those students that have athletics at the very beginning of the day do not take part in the breakfast program. Having it later in the day, for example, on a traditional schedule of a class being around 50 minutes and having it, say, between second and third period or whatever works best for that particular school.

Commissioner: So just to be clear, the offering breakfast at 8:00, after 8:00, after the start of the day, for high school students is a good thing in the classroom or is that a group that you could do it in the cafeteria and not necessarily have it in the classroom or does it matter to you?

Saunders: I don't think it matters. I think it's an issue, you know, there are many factors and I think you have the physical location of the food. I've seen that be an issue where sometimes you'll have one campus with a cafeteria that serves multiple schools and so one school may have to walk, say, 150 yards to go get the food.

Commissioner: I was just thinking for the high schools I know—



Commissioner: Yeah.

Commissioner: —food in the classroom for tenth and eleventh graders might possibly, maybe not in Arkansas, be a distraction but I guess it's not. You don't see that at all?

Saunders: I think you have the argument and the resistance at first among classroom teachers of initiating that and I think that's between kindergarten all the way up through twelfth grade.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Saunders: Yes.

Commissioner: I recently had a horrific experience. I went back to my high school. [laughter] Don't go back to your high school. Things change quickly in 40-some years but I will tell you I was appalled at the plate waste of kids in high school. Do you see that? I mean, it was appalling how much food was not eaten and I'm wondering if that is an issue, what schools can do about that.

Saunders: Yes, and, you know, that's always an issue and I always try to approach it with the end in mind, you know, encouraging districts that the entire purpose of a child nutrition unit is simply to feed kids. And if they're not eating, we need to look at things that, to change, to do, menu change and one common method is simply to look at the menu items and see how popular they were on the purchases for those days and try to repeat those that are more popular.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Saunders: Yes, ma'am.

Commissioner: It's good you're in touch with that.

Commissioner: One quick question, and thank you for being with us today. We often hear at a school like the school we were at this morning, Martin Luther King Intermediate Elementary, that because of breakfast in the classroom, there is a decrease in nurses' visits. There's less tardiness. There's better attendance but we always tend to hear it, at least as I travel the country, anecdotally and I'm wondering if you have any advice on how we can, in a district or in a state, roll up that data so that we have some real correlations that help us understand the impact of breakfast in the classroom.



Saunders: I do know, and last year, we, or in this past year, we had worked trying to get some of that data together. We have a very robust data system in Arkansas, student enrollment, discipline infractions, things of that nature that, to try to consolidate that and look at those best practices and see. I think you're exactly right. It's, you know, common sense tells you that it would have an effect on those things but where are the numbers?

Commissioner: Sure.

Commissioner: Right, yeah, that's right and we seem to never get beyond the anecdotal. So I'd love to work with you or have some other folks we're working with here, work with you to figure out how to do that. I think it could be very powerful and instruct us one way or the other. I mean, the data will speak for itself but at least we would have it.

Saunders: Absolutely and I'd love to assist with that.

Commissioner: Thanks.

Commissioner: I have a question on the Backpack Program that you said that you've seen it be effective. Can you talk about what you mean by effective and what are some, how often are you helping to implement that Backpack Program, who funds it, and what type of educational health impacts might that make?

Saunders: The, now that is run from an organization outside of the state department, so I don't want to speak on their behalf but I know my experience with that has been that every Friday backpacks are filled with nutritional items for the kids to take home for the weekend and essentially, they're not intended just for the student but for the family, as well. Common items, like peanut butter, large things of peanut butter, other various things, I just remember that one in particular and you will have kids, I've seen students get to the point where I mean, they really come and they want that bag of food on Friday and it's not expensive food. It's not, you know, delicacy food, as you would say and, you know, to see a kid asking for food like that is very telling of the situation and the lack thereof on the weekend and it's usually done every week on Fridays. They bring it back on Monday to be refilled again and that's, I may be incorrect on this and that's why I was saying for a group outside the state department but I believe the Rice Depot donations from various food sources thought the state and works upon that.

Commissioner: Thank you. Are there any other questions?

Commissioner: No.

Commissioner: Thank you very much.



Commissioner: Thank you very much for your testimony.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Saunders: Thank you.

Commissioner: We really appreciate it. Robert, you want to go ahead?



**JENNIFER LAURENT
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RANDY SAMS OUTREACH SHELTER**

Commissioner: Robert, do you want to call the next one?

Commissioner: Yes, our next witness is Jennifer Laurent, executive director of Randy Sams Outreach Shelter. Welcome, Jennifer.

Laurent: Thank you. Good morning and thank you so much for having me. I appreciate each of you spending your time learning a little more about what we do. I am the director of Randy Sams. I've been there 5 years. Prior to my time there, I was a data analyst for the Child Abuse Prevention Service. Today, I'd like to just shift gears just a slight bit. We've spent a lot of time discussing childhood hunger, which is heart wrenching and heartbreaking and everything we want to prevent. And part of how we work to prevent that is we feed adults.

My shelter primarily feeds adult men and women. We are an emergency shelter and we're the only free emergency shelter of our size in an 85-mile radius. Within three states, we cannot get to another shelter until we reach Little Rock, until we reach Dallas area, and until we reach Shreveport. So the services provided at Randy Sams are essential to our community, not only to those who are homeless seeking shelter but to those who are trying to keep housed and stabled. I often wonder what the real link is for people who come into our shelter. It crosses every gender, every race, every sexual orientation but the real link is desperation. What we see every day is 100% of the clients who come to our door have made the choice between providing food for their family or rent and every time rent lost. That's why they're with us. So what we do is we, our goal is to provide shelter. Our goal is to see those clients move back into self-sustained community living, to reunite them with their children, if appropriate, to make sure that they maintain their life on the outside, to clear room in other ways and to do that, we utilize food.

I, for the longest time, couldn't understand why, when we provided three meals, that wasn't enough. We'd go do bed checks and there'd be food underneath them and I would think, "Well, that's really interesting because we provide more food than most households." We have three square meals a day. We provide two snacks in between and if you have a health issue, we're going to address that in the same way but we were finding hoarded food. It was shoved between mattresses. It was underneath beds. It was in backpacks, everywhere they could find it and so finally, I asked. I stopped trying to decide why logically and I said, "Why is this happening?" It's because so many of our clients have been forced to live without food for so long that they couldn't ever imagine going back to that. They wanted to make sure that no matter what happened, that they wouldn't be hungry in the coming days. We make sure that we provide nutritious food. That's a giant challenge that the homeless population faces because so many believe that if you're homeless, anything is better than nothing.



Daily I field calls asking if we can take expired food to take to our clients because they're homeless, so that's got to be better. No, we can't feed homeless people expired food. If you can't eat it at your house, we can't eat it at ours. We make, we try to make sure that the barriers are reduced. Our shelter is a low barrier shelter. We require no ID. We require no drug test. We just want to get you inside so then we can work backwards to solve the issues that you have. In that we use food.

As I said, we're an adult shelter but not long ago we had a 16-year-old boy. He ran away from home. He's an unaccompanied youth. There are no youth shelters in our area. We don't put 16-year-olds on the street. So I needed to talk to him. I needed to know what was going on. I needed to get some information so I could call CPS and the only way I could get him to talk to me was with M&Ms. He hadn't eaten in days but M&Ms would make him talk. I know his favorite color is blue. I know what he's afraid of and I know that because I had food in my hand, and food is a currency. We work to remove the barriers to receiving food. Our goal is to make sure that if you can't get to us, if you don't have the gas to come in and seek a food box.

We're the only 24-hour shelter around. Many people go to work. They can't get to the standard food pantries. They can't get to the food banks. They can't get where there are general resources available because they're at work and they can't risk that time. They can't risk their family being homeless because they needed to take off for half an hour to go pick up food, so they again have to make an impossible choice. So we see people in the middle of the night. "Can we come get food?" We see people on the weekends and on Christmas and on Thanksgiving. On Thanksgiving we had upwards of 400 people who walked through our door needing a meal. Last year we served upwards of 100,000 meals. We served to those who were in our shelter. We served those who are outside of our shelter. We serve those who have been barred from shelter services but just need to eat. And then we send food out to the homeless communities in the woods. Many of those people cannot function around other people. Seventy-six percent of our clients are mentally ill. To ask a schizophrenic person to come in and sit down at a meal and behave in ways that we deem socially acceptable may be more difficult than they are able to do. But what we try to do is make sure that the food gets to them. If that means that we send it with their friend, that'll work. If that means we send it with a mental health case worker in the hopes of intervention, that will work. We'll make sure, I will set it outside and watch from my office window, if that's what it takes but creativity and collaboration are key in addressing these challenges because for every adult that we can place back in stable housing, that's one more person who the system doesn't have to support, who the system can work and focus its resources elsewhere.

This year, we have placed 54 people in permanent housing. Last year, we placed 157 in permanent housing, and each of those are still there. We know that some of those have been reunited with their children. One family is completely reunited and we know that



those people are still being fed and we know that because they'll come talk with us if they need food. Food is a gateway. It opens doors and it allows people to make better decisions if they have adequate amounts. I, as a data analyst in my prior life, was always a little insulated from the direct service section of what we were doing. And one day early in my time at the shelter, a little girl came through, she was touring with her school. And I said, "Oh, we have, we provide so many great meals and lots of our residents come here and they even gain weight," and the little girl said, "Is the lettuce slimy?" And I said, "Absolutely not." And she said, "Well, that's really good because I've had to eat slimy lettuce because that's what we could have." And it was getting kicked in the teeth at the idea of a child eating slimy lettuce because that's what was available.

The systemic problems that are obvious to many people, worrying about fraud, worrying about abuse, absolutely. I run a nonprofit homeless shelter. I know what it means to stretch a dollar. I know what it means to have to avoid people coming in and abusing the system. I know what it is for people to try to come in and get what they need, so that they can use it to get other things they need. Desperation breeds desperation. When food can be used as a currency, if you can get me a loaf of bread then I can get you diapers. Then we'll provide the bread, if that's what it takes. We collaborate with over 50 partner agencies. Our shelter services and the food that comes with it are only available because of the collaborations that we have. We have no state funding.

We are donations. We are, we partner with our local food bank, Harvest Texarkana. We partner with multiple, multiple church agencies and in fact, we're founded because a young man who was killed in high school spent his weekends serving soup in a soup kitchen and so his parents donated money to build a shelter and it's grown to house more than 85 people per night. We charge nothing for our services and what we want more people to know is that food, food's going to open the door that's necessary for people to get the jobs that they need. We send sack lunches. We often think to send children to school with food but rarely do we think about homeless adults who are unable to eat during the day and what that means for their job performance in the afternoon. We make sure that there's a snack available for when people come home from work because sometimes it's a really long time from your early lunch break to the time that you can come back. And once we can address those most immediate needs then and only then are we able to move forward with making sure that they can move back into the community as self-sustaining citizens. Again, I thank you for your time and your willing to listen to, willingness to listen to us.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you very much for your testimony.

Commissioner: Thank you. [applause] I don't know much about shelters. Is there a national organization that you belong to?



Laurent: There is a national kind of umbrella homeless network and the shelters and food pantries and soup kitchens can work underneath them.

Commissioner: Underneath it?

Laurent: I work in Texarkana, which is, of course, a border city. My shelter sits in the Texas side and there we are a member of the Texas Homeless Network and work with the state on other homeless issues throughout the state of Texas but homelessness knows no boundaries and so often we see government officials arguing over which state our clients belong to because they don't qualify for any state benefits. So a national organization is much needed and appreciated.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Is your shelter participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program or do you get any federal funding for the nutrition that you provide?

Laurent: We receive FEMA funding through the Emergency Food and Shelter Program for food. The rest is donated and we've been very lucky to have a surplus this year and we've been able for even those that move out, we're able to continue to follow up with them to maintain and we do that by providing a food box. We go to their apartments. We're able to check to make sure things are as they should be and that they're still safe and we help make sure their pantry is stocked.

Chilton: I wanted to ask also about why is it that your shelter doesn't receive state or federal funding?

Laurent: Well, the FEMA is federal funding.

Commissioner: Federal, okay, it's FEMA.

Laurent: State funding, again, on, it's federal, funneled down through the federal system and then allocated through the United Ways but the state funding in a border city, our population is cut in half, so we serve less from Texas and less from Arkansas and kind of fall into a weird gray area for neither but that has allowed us some freedom to make sure that we can be very creative in how we offer services. We can move around and that is, in many ways, a blessing.

Commissioner: I have more questions.

Commissioner: Go ahead, keep going.



Commissioner: I'm going to carry on. [laughter] People who experience homelessness, you said that 100% pretty much couldn't pay their rent anymore. Those of us who work on homelessness and hunger and the mix of the two recognize that exposure to violence and adversity in the home or in their childhood has a strong correlation with being homeless. Can you talk about some of the other services that you provide? Are you screening people for their exposure to violence and what are you doing about the mental health issues that you're encountering among the participants?

Laurent: We do. Once they're in the door and generally, we offer a meal before we ever get paperwork started. Many that come to us, it takes quite some time to be able to find the inner fortitude to be able to walk in a shelter door and say, "I need help." And so we start and we have a meal and then we go from there. We participate in a coordinated access system, meaning that we're screening for multiple, multiple issues, so that we can appropriately and quickly refer them to the right agency. We work with a case manager. We have a full-time case manager, who meets with every client individually, discusses what barriers brought them here and what we can do to help take them out of homelessness and into self-sustained housing.

Commissioner: Thank you. Billy?

Commissioner: Just one question, are you, is there a waiting list for the shelter? Are you able to serve everybody that needs it? What's your relationship between capacity and need?

Laurent: There are not enough beds and unfortunately, the need always outpaces the resources in the homeless community. Again, we revert back to creativity. Our bed space is full but we contacted the Fire Marshall and said, "Weather's not good. What can we do? I'm willing to open office space, if you're willing to acknowledge that we can fit more people," and they agreed. We, in the very extreme cold weather that is unusual for our area, we coordinated with the church and the local Red Cross and opened a popup shelter to accommodate that need. We work with the local Salvation Army on the Arkansas side to the Texas side and worked to meet that need. So and if those are not options, we do a lot of family mediation and get you home. If we can get a bus ticket where you are not homeless in another city then we'll do that and then if none of those are options and you're still on the street and in danger, then we start looking for shelters outside of our area and how we can get you there.

Commissioner: Got it, thank you.

Commissioner: You're next.



Commissioner: Very good.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you very much.



CHAROLETTE TIDWELL

DIRECTOR OF THE ANTIOCH CONSOLIDATED ASSOCIATION FOR YOUTH AND FAMILY

Commissioner: Our next expert witness is Charolette Tidwell, the director of the Antioch Consolidated Association for Youth and Family.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you very much.

Commissioner: Thank you very much, Miss Tidwell.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Tidwell: I'm Charolette Tidwell. I'm the director of Antioch Consolidated Association for Youth and Family. I've been an entity with this program 15 years now. My background is that of all levels of health care. I've been in academia. I'm retired and I needed something to do. [laughter] So for 15 years, I've looked at something that means something to someone. In the area that I was in, in health care, it was very much noted that the development of best practices was something that was important in that arena. And when I started with just volunteerism at Antioch, I thought at first, my first responsibility would be something that I did when I was recruited to Beverly Enterprises, which was corporate America was the developing of best practices. So I knew immediately that my role would be that of piloting and seeing what worked and what did not work.

Advocacy was a fundamental principle and the philosophy was I fundamentally believed that all people have worth, all people have a desire to be successful, and that it is our responsibility to find those means and mechanisms for those things to happen with everyone. I was born and raised in poverty and I realized instantly that it was the community that surrounded me that afforded me the opportunity to become successful, a community that no longer exists in my estimation. We serve, Antioch serves over 7,000 individuals a month. All the team is volunteer. We have a cadre of about 10 people, six days a week, and around 35 volunteers to help us with the many activities that go on. We service 11,750 individuals a year and we operate the largest food bank in the Fort Smith area. Our fundamental goal is to build capacity and, I feel that with Feeding America and the organization of the alliance that I have a fundamental responsibility to pilot some needs that we see daily to then communicate those best practices to entities above me, so that I can make things better.

You have a packet before you. The compiler of this document was done by myself and Ken Kupchick of the River Valley Regional Food Bank, who taught me to look at statistical data as it related to hunger. But from a personal perspective, we can look at the empirical data,



but we still have to have that one-to-one interaction, that personal relationship that we build with every client and to be able to directionally tell us where we need to go. I believe that the approach of Antioch is no different than your panel's approach and that is that we want a better America and a better Arkansas. I want the fourth of FDR's Four Freedoms, freedom from want, to be a actual fundamental reality in this world. So we have launched, not exactly launched, from Antioch ourself but it has been at our doors to profile hunger nationally. That was not one of our intentions originally, but since we've had the opportunity to have *National Geographic*, *NBC Nightly News*, and six magazines profile what we do in Arkansas, we then feel that we have a challenge to help with the assistance of best practices, give our recommendations and solutions as we go forward and as we see them.

Daily, in fact, some of the things we see every day; just yesterday before I came to Little Rock, I had a phone call from a 28-year-old lady, young lady, she had a baby. The baby was about a year old and there was seven other members in the family. She had been in Fort Smith exactly two days we all know in the room that you can't access the services that you need in two days. She came in with a multiplicity of needs that we were able to assist her with. So therefore, I am a believer in partnership with entities and being close enough to them that you don't have to have an appointment for a client in an emergency situation.

We've done a great deal of partnering across Arkansas. First and foremost, we started with our school system in town, so that we could teach health, wellness, and nutrition fundamentally from a medical standpoint, from having fun that kids learn as they play, they are educated and involving holistically, the extended family. Those have garnered us in association with the school system. They have garnered us around 1,500 kids and their extended family, the whole medical community, the whole Fort Smith community, law, legal, medicine, every entity has been brought. Actually, we were the first to bring the SNAP Mobile out of Little Rock to Fort Smith to instantly sign up people for those services that they need and the SNAP personnel were then able to educate them. The first grocery store \$10 ticket that we had on Cooking Matters, we had to inform Little Rock that they need to triple that number because the clerks couldn't handle the volume in the grocery store. So we believe in the art of publicity. We believe in the art of getting the information out there so it can be used by persons that need it. On page, I have in your handout several recommendations and solutions as we have seen them firsthand and known that those recommendations can go forward. We would, in fact, like the opportunity to in some mechanism be able, as we go forward, developing best practices that we can keep in touch with you in this committee. I wanted to talk slow a little so you could ask any questions. It's been a marvelous opportunity that we've had to go forward.

Commissioner: Thank you very much. [applause] Are there questions?

Commissioner: Yes. Thank you, Miss Tidwell. I was very interested in your endorsement of the Cooking Matters curriculum.



Tidwell: Oh, it was wonderful. We didn't have enough \$10.00 tickets, coupons. [laughter]

Commissioner: What did you like best about it?

Tidwell: I liked the fact that it was, first of all, it had a carrot at the beginning. It's, you have to be able to offer a person something that they really think they need in order to get them there. So it had a carrot at the front and I went through the aisles myself. I always say that what I like to do is have a children's play area in the fruit and vegetable sections of every grocery store. So there has to be, identified, something that that person wants and you can get them there. So the carrot was at the beginning. The education then followed.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Billy?

Commissioner: Just in your very opening comments you talked about your own growing up and the community that supported you—

Tidwell: Yes.

Commissioner: —and the kind of disappearance of that community—

Tidwell: Yes.

Commissioner: —now and I'm just wondering if you could say a word more about that, what ways in which you think we might be able to compensate for that.

Tidwell: I think that is done through partnership. I've talked to many of the social clubs in Fort Smith and after that tour of conversation, I had the U.S. Marshall's Museum call me to meet with me and they said, "Charolette, what would you desire more," and I said, "To, in fact, improve the mentorship program for children utilizing an intergenerational approach." One approach that when I was in the area of long-term care, we used to put hope on both sides of the pendulum, a sense of worth for the elderly person and a sense of wisdom for the young person. So we deal a lot with the community in which we live and targeting those people that can help us achieve what needs to be achieved.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Dr. Finn?

Commissioner: Thank you very much. Where's Fort Smith in Arkansas?



Tidwell: It's at the northwest corner—

Commissioner: It's at the northwest corner?

Tidwell: —up near Fayetteville and we're kind of the River Valley, though.

Commissioner: You're the River?

Tidwell: We're not up there in the rich section. We're down here in the valley. [laughter]

Commissioner: I like your suggestion of best practices and I'm wondering how you would recommend doing that.

Tidwell: I think as I did at the hospital and as I did when I was hired to do that for the largest nursing home in the world.

Commissioner: I'm familiar with Beverly.

Tidwell: I think there needs to be identification of those pilot or those areas that exemplify best practices and then that be placed into a model piloted a little bit more but put in a model, not to take away the autonomy of anybody but to—

Commissioner: To gather them?

Tidwell: —gather them together as a committee, people that actually do it. My title is up close and in real time.

Commissioner: Yeah, okay, gotcha, thank you.

Commissioner: Thanks, I'd like to ask you about how important partnerships are to you and collaboration, not only in your own community but across the state or across the country. If you could talk a little bit about the importance of collaboration and partnership, not only with different agencies and organizations but also across race, ethnicity, and gender.

Tidwell: I think it's critically important. If we are to move forward with this issue called hunger, more disciplines need to be brought at the table of communication. I definitely, even though I'm accustomed to health care, I really don't know anything about legislation. So what we actually did was one of our legislators was here, we actually involved the involvement of three House representatives and one senator because I think you are able to see more globally. I think sometimes if we just stay in our little state we don't see the



global picture. The global picture allows us to identify strategies, identify, listen to groups from the bottom up, and come to an intelligent decision, so across every discipline. At our health fair we have different disciplines. We even have the soccer team from the Hispanic community. We look at communities. We look at disciplines and we look at also the inclusion of the people that actually execute the work.

Commissioner: Any other questions? Thank you very much for your testimony.

Commissioner: Thank you very much.

Commissioner: Thank you for coming.



JOHN SELIG
DIRECTOR, ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Commissioner: Our next witness is John Selig, the director of the Arkansas Department of Human Services. Welcome, John, glad to have you.

Selig: Thank you. Well, thanks for having me. I often feel like a bureaucrat, no more so than after following people who've just been speaking really from the heart and at the local level. I'm the director of the Arkansas Department of Human Services, which is an umbrella organization and we do kind of soup-to-nuts social services, anything from early childhood education and development to nursing-home care. We do juvenile justice, child welfare, disability programs, we have Medicaid, and obviously, a number of the nutrition programs. I think people often know more about the other programs we offer for disabilities, child welfare, et cetera, but the nutrition programs really are fundamental for us, obviously because people don't benefit from parenting education, kids don't learn well, seniors can't really talk about what's happening in terms of their health care if they're hungry. So we realize how important these problems are and I thought I would just spend a few minutes just giving you the scope of the situation in Arkansas, in case you haven't already heard that, talk a little bit about the programs we offer and the size of them and then make a few recommendations and then I'm happy to take a few questions.

We have, in Arkansas, just to give you a few facts, about 20% of the people in Arkansas are below the poverty level. That puts us 48th in the country. Twenty-nine percent of the children are below the poverty level. That's 49th in the country. Twenty-two percent of households experience hunger or food insecurity. That puts us 51st, which, I guess, is after Puerto Rico, probably the worst in the country, and the situation is worse for seniors. Forty percent of seniors in Arkansas experience food insecurity, 40%. We are at the bottom in the country in terms of food insecurity for seniors. So these issues are huge for us and obviously, they have an impact on a lot of the other services we provide. It's just hard to do much else for families and for individuals if you're not dealing with hunger to begin with and the food insecurity. We, as I said, we have a number of programs for different age groups. Most of them federally funded and I just kind of wanted to go through those quickly.

The Division of Childcare and Early Childhood Education, which is really focused on giving kids a safe, high quality, nurturing learning environment, runs a couple of programs. First is the Child and Adult Food Care Program, which obviously offers services in residential programs, both for children and for adults and that program in 2013, we served over 24 million meals. Every time I hear these statistics, I think that it can't be possible but it just shows what the level of need is, 24 million meals in that program. The program, that division, also offers the meals in the summer, the summer food program and that's been just a terrific success for us in Arkansas with the partnership. We share our strength with



the former Governor's office, with the USDA. We quadrupled the number of feeding sites from 300 and something sites to over 1,200 sites in about a, I believe it was a 3-year period and it's, we now in every county in the state, I believe, have at least one feeding site and it's, you know, that's so important because these are kids that are able to access the free and reduced lunch at school and then may go 3 months without knowing for sure that they're going to have a good, solid meal. So it's a terrific program and really it has been the partnership with the community organizations, the governor's office, the USDA that's made this work for us. It's not something that we as a bureaucracy as an agency in any way could've done ourselves.

I think you heard from Dr. Pat Casey from Children's Hospital and I was going to give you an example from there but I'll just quickly tell you. We have one of those feeding sites there. They serve over 30,000 kids a month and see them in the hospital and we had one grandmother call us, who takes six kids in regularly, one of whom is disabled and has to go to Children's Hospital regularly and she just talked about how before she wasn't sure how she was going to feed them when she takes these kids in and out and now it's one big stressor that she doesn't have to worry about is because of this, these feeding sites that we have set up at Children's Hospital. So the partnership with Children's, with these other folks, is incredibly important to us. Our Division of County Operations, which doesn't mean much to you but it's one of our other divisions. It offers a number of other programs, the largest of which is the SNAP Program. We have almost 700,000 people eligible for the SNAP Program receive, actually receiving benefits from the SNAP Program in the last year. As you know, that's for low income families and individuals and it also provides some education and training, some food, excuse me, some work experience, also, but that's a very limited piece and I'm going to talk about that later. The primary thing that it does is the nutrition assistance. We have 33% of Arkansans who receive SNAP are either elderly or disabled. Almost half of the people who receive SNAP benefits are children and 41% of those receiving SNAP benefits are in working families.

As you know, those are families who have a job, at least one of the adults has a job but they're not making enough money to put food on the table reliably and so they still need some assistance. Our, that same division also runs the Commodity Distribution and Emergency Food Program, which provides USDA donated food to needy and unemployed people through schools, through charitable correction institutions, through disaster organizations, soup kitchens, food banks. Last year 24 million pounds of food were distributed and it wasn't enough. There were still people needing food that we weren't able to provide but it's a tremendous program. We, obviously, hope that the available food can be increased and then for seniors, our Division of Aging and Adult Services provides assistance in two ways, and I should say all of these services, we are the funder, we monitor, but it's all done through community organizations. We do very little of this directly ourselves. If it wasn't for the community partners, none of this would happen.



For seniors, we do it in two ways. One through congregate meals, through senior centers and at senior adult programs and then we do it through home delivered meals, again, volunteers taking meals out to adults, hopefully, at least one meal a day to their home. The interesting thing about seniors, as you probably know, is not only is the nutrition important for them but probably of equal importance is the socialization and kind of the monitoring you can do. When seniors come in for the meal at the senior center, they also get a chance to socialize, to be seen by others and really stay healthy, kind of mentally, in addition to kind of getting the nutrition. The same thing happens on a lesser level when you have a volunteer who goes out to a senior's home, it may be the only person they see that day and that volunteer might be the only one to put eyes on that senior citizen and see if, in fact, they're well, see if they might need some other services, so just that contact is incredibly important to have and we really value those senior services but that's an area where we are struggling to provide. We have a long waiting list but even with that, we provided millions of meals through those congregate programs and through home delivered meals to thousands of senior Arkansans last year. Again, not enough because we are number one in the country in terms of senior hunger. Just in terms of some of the things, quickly, that we would recommend, one is just continue to study and utilize evidence-based approaches to these programs to see, given that we're always going to have resources may ensure that we're helping people make educated food choices that really are nutritional, study whether these programs actually have an impact. For example, on diabetes, the impact on health and impact on whether seniors can stay out of nursing homes longer because they're able to stay healthy longer at home and have the socialization that they need.

We also need to, I mentioned this earlier, employment and training, while it's a part of the SNAP Program, it's always really been an afterthought. It's a tiny amount of money here in Arkansas, I think the federal money was about \$800,000 that was available in terms of the 100% funding. We are now probably in Arkansas, as in many other states, going to move away from the statewide waiver. So we are going to have more able bodied adults who are going to need to be looking for employment or gainfully or involved in education and training, there are not nearly enough resources available to do that. We have to create opportunities for people. We have got to. While SNAP is a great program, we really need to get, obviously, at the source of the problem, which is people don't have jobs that provide enough income for them to not need the SNAP Program. We'd love to work ourselves out of business but we're not there yet. We are going to try to and are trying to partner with community organizations, the governor. Governor Hutchinson recently met with Goodwill to talk about how we might partner with them, with their education and training programs but I would encourage you, in addition, to thinking about how to provide more food assistance, we got to get at the root of the problem and try to do more around employment and training for those people who can work, who aren't taking care of someone who is disabled or who are themselves, elderly. Then I would say we need to focus on program integrity. I think the SNAP Program, in particular, works well but for any of these programs, even the smallest amount of fraud, waste, and abuse taints the program and makes it more



difficult to get the support we need. So while there's a lot of work done, I recently visited with our partners and regional office of the USDA about food, about trafficking, what you can do about the stores, a few of them that are trafficking. As I said, as we expand our summer feeding program, there are a few bad apples that we've identified working with our federal partners and just a few can taint the program. So we really have to be vigilant and make sure there's good program integrity. And finally, I'd just come back to seniors and anything we can do to improve the outreach to seniors. They are hesitant to use the SNAP Program relative to other populations, either because of the stigma or because the payments are low and we've got to find a way, either through the SNAP Program or the other federal and state funding that's available. We got to find a way to strengthen the services that are available for seniors. So thank you very much, really appreciate the chance to visit with you and I'm happy to answer the questions that I can.

Commissioner: Thank you very much.

Commissioner: Yeah, thank you very much. [applause] We're nodding our heads here, right on. Is it difficult to get community support to focus on seniors? It seems like there's a great passion with children and rightly so, it's the future but seniors, is it compelling to present to people the importance of seniors?

Selig: You know, I think in some ways seniors are probably the easiest to sell to the public in terms of, I mean, nobody wants mom or grandmother to go hungry. It's hard to sell it to seniors. It's hard to get seniors to use, in some cases the benefits may be \$10.00 or \$20.00 a month and I think some seniors are like, "Well, that's not worth the effort." Of course, if you talk about a year's worth and it's \$250.00 worth—

Commissioner: Yeah, well, that's right.

Selig: —that's \$250.00 that could go and help to pay for your medications or otherwise but it doesn't seem like a lot of money but I think many of our seniors grew up in a time where you didn't use government assistance and, you know, part of the argument that you have to make is we understand that but we need you to stay healthy because if you're not healthy, even if you're worried about expenditures, if you're not healthy, we're going to spend more on you at a nursing facility or assisted living because you weren't getting the nutrition you needed. I just think it's going to be a constant education campaign and maybe one that we need to partner more with our community programs to focus on seniors.

Commissioner: That's very helpful, thank you.

Selig: Sure.



Commissioner: Thank you very much for your testimony. I have just two questions. The first was on the working, as a work support, SNAP can really be wonderful to shore up low wages and make those wages go further and make work pay. And the 41% of people who have a worker in the household but that sometimes has to do with work sometime in the past year or work some. Have you noticed a change in the number of working SNAP recipients who are not working full-time, maybe not getting as many hours as they had in the past?

Selig: I just don't have any data on that. It may be the case. I don't know.

Commissioner: And then the second question is on teen pregnancy prevention and sort of helping folks make good decisions about when is a good time to have children when they have two involved parents ready to raise them together. What does Arkansas Department of Human Services do in that regard?

Selig: That work is really done more by our Department of Health, so I can't speak to that directly. I mean, indirectly we would hit it, for instance, through our child welfare programs but teen pregnancy prevention would be more through our Department of Health and I'm not sure if they're testifying today or not.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Selig: Sure.

Commissioner: Thank you, Director Selig. You talked about the phenomenal success with increased summer meal sites, which we've heard from others, as well, and we've also heard from other witnesses this morning about the need for more flexibility for children that those summer meal sites just are not feasible, so flexibility around congregate feeding, that type of thing. I just wanted to get your point of view on that.

Selig: Well, first of all, thank, your organization has been central to our success here. It has been a struggle in many areas to find feeding sites. Although I have to say once kind of the coalition came together, I mean, it is a, and I know Buster Lackey is here, it's a sales job to convince people to open their facilities to get into a new line of work. They're not really making any money on it, these community organizations. I mean, they really have to do it out of the goodness of their heart. So it is, it seems to me, talking with Buster and others, it is a one-to-one discussion at the local level that has to happen in order to create these sites and I think you do have to be very creative because in some cases and, you know, it's true with all programs, a lot of times you have these plans and say, "We want to put one here. We want to have this program there," but in the end, it comes down to the personalities, who's the leader in that community who's willing to do it and step up and do the work and



that leader's site might not be exactly where you wanted it but if you can get the kids to go there, the fact that it's one block over really shouldn't bother you too much, and I have to say, USDA has been very good at working with us to say, "Let's be creative. We need to be serving the target population but let's make sure that we're not hiding behind the rules, but in fact, we make the rules work for us and the flexibility that's in them to match the sites and our efforts with the people that are out there willing to do the work."

Commissioner: Are there places where, I guess, do you see reasonable paths to more flexibility that wouldn't detract from the values of congregate feeding at the sites?

Selig: Yeah, honestly, I don't know the details well enough to give you a good answer for it. I could get you with our staff who know this much better than I do.

Commissioner: Got it. Thank you.

Selig: Okay, sure.

Commissioner: I'd like to ask a question about disability and also, behavioral health.

Selig: Uh-huh [yes].

Commissioner: I know you oversee, you mentioned disability at the outset but I didn't hear much about what Arkansas is doing in terms of helping people who have disabilities and making sure that they don't experience higher rates of food insecurity, which we know that they are actually intricately related and it also may have to do with the lack of ability of not only of work but to work, but also because of the reduction of SNAP benefits that happens when people receive social security. So can you talk a little bit about that?

Selig: Yeah, I, we don't, for people with disabilities, to my knowledge, we don't kind of target the food insecurity directly. We try to target the individual working with those local organizations and if food insecurity is an issue, we would encourage them to open a program, for example, as part of their disability program, as part of the early learning program, we encourage them to either open or partner with a site to serve those people. So we don't, I can't think of programs that we target that directly. It's more so that we work through the, kind of holistically trying to approach the individual and their needs. If hunger is one of the issues, we try to encourage it that way.

Commissioner: Thank you. Yesterday we went to go visit a place called Jericho Way, which serves people who are actively homeless or at risk for homelessness and it's a day, daycare, day place, where people can come and get some services and they said that the most important issue that they're addressing or that is presenting among



the people that come to Jericho Way is problems with mental health and yet currently they're not screening for mental health issues. They don't seem to have a referral mechanism in place. What could the state be doing to help people who are homeless or at risk for homelessness to address their behavioral needs?

Selig: We are trying to move to a, right now we pay for individualized services for people with serious mental illness. We don't do a very good job of kind of coordinating the care, broadly speaking, in really meeting their needs. We are trying to move to a system, largely funded by Medicaid, where we connect the person, homeless or not, who has serious mental illness, really connect them with what we call the health home, where and often it is the mental health provider or whoever is seeing that person the most often, maybe they see them every day to connect them and really help pay for that care coordination. It's more than just the case management you would get from your primary care physician but someone who really knows their needs in terms of meds, maybe their needs for some supportive employment, maybe their needs for nutrition assistance. So the idea would be to approach the person as a whole and say, "What is it we can do to help you remain stable, to remain productive, to remain out of the state hospital?" So that's the way we'll want to approach it and be kind of nutrition specific but it would be saying, "This person has far more than just schizophrenia or just the need for the medications to deal with schizophrenia. They need help trying to stay stable in life and hopefully, not be homeless, unless in some cases, that's what they choose to be. So, as you know, some individuals don't really want to be in any kind of a structured setting but you got to kind of meet the person where they are and try to wrap those services around them to help them be as productive as they can.

Commissioner: Thank you. Do you have a question, Robert? I have one more.

Commissioner: Please.

Commissioner: What is it about Arkansas that puts it at the top of the list for the highest rates of very low food security in the country? That's how you opened up your remarks about Arkansas and some of the challenges that it has. In your professional career I'm sure you traveled around to other states. Can you talk about what might be unique to Arkansas?

Selig: Yeah, so the short answer is I wish I knew what makes us that unique. We, obviously, are a very low-income state and a rural state. And both of those make it a real challenge, both in terms of, I mean, low income but also, that means you also don't have the community resources there that you might have and you can look at different parts of Arkansas. Northwest Arkansas is much more prosperous than southeast Arkansas and there are more community organizations there to help, just because there's just more resources available, income's higher. So I don't know why we are that different from the



four or five other states that are really struggling. We, I guess, we're more focused on trying to not be at the bottom, trying to improve because it's such an issue. I haven't spent a lot of time trying to figure out why it is we're there. I just know we're there and we've got to get better.

Commissioner: Thank you very much for your testimony.

Selig: Thank you.

Commissioner: Thank you very much.



**CHARLOTTE DOUGLAS
REPRESENTATIVE, ARKANSAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Commissioner: So our next witness is Charlotte Douglas, representative from the Arkansas House of Representatives. Thank you and welcome.

Douglas: Thank you for having me, good to see you again.

Commissioner: Nice to see you again.

Douglas: So I'm much more of a 1,000-foot up looking down type of person and I'd like to share with you what my philosophy on hunger has become probably over about the last 6 months to a year. I, before I got into the legislature I was a classroom teacher and I saw hunger in a different one-on-one situation, in charge of a backpack program at our school but being in the legislature, I see that what we try to do sometimes is we put issues in silos and we'll deal with an issue and we don't see the relationships between all of the other things that are going on and I think what Director Selig just said was exactly what, you know, I am saying, that instead of putting, you know, workforce and the economy and health, mental health, and all of these in separate silos, you could almost put hunger at the center of a spoke of a wheel and you could say, "How does that affect someone's career opportunities? If they're hunger, if they're hungry at school, how does that affect how they've learned over their 12 years of their, you know, of their school, of their schooling? Did they eventually drop out? Were they deemed to be, you know, special ed because they just couldn't learn? They couldn't concentrate."

If we put that hunger and look at their health, mental health issues through the eyes of hunger, then were they so depressed over their life of poverty and hunger that they just gave up on themselves, they gave up on their children and their children end up in DHS. If we, you know, use hunger as the spoke of that wheel but just knowing that hunger has so many overlaps to what we deal with in the world is not enough, you know. How do we take that knowledge and then and find the solutions? And what I believe we must do is to no longer just hand out food but take many, many of the ideas that we've heard in this room today and create programs that have dual functions because unless people become empowered to take hold of their lives and become, you know, something better, give them the power to reach above their circumstances, then all we are doing is handing out food and that will never reach an end. I've got some examples of where we are doing that, that you may not have heard about today so far. The, a couple of programs that I've come in contact with, even using a school breakfast program. We have one in my district where instead of just pulling the kids that are disadvantaged or free and reduced lunch in, they end recess just a little early. They pull all the kids in by classes. They come through a line. They either get a green sack or a yellow sack, depending on hot lunch or hot breakfast or cold breakfast or a red, which says they have an allergy and then they go with their teacher



to their classroom. All kids get it. At one point in my career I was very opposed to kids that could afford that being able to get that but what that does is it does not single out those kids and does not hurt their self-esteem. That's one thing. The other thing that it does is when they all sit down as a community in their classroom they talk together. They enjoy that little meal together. They have a little placemat that they sit out there. They have manners. The teacher is teaching them some social issues and it, what I call it, it's like a reset button for their day . . . [audio transition to next recording, gap in recording]

To do two meals but there's a regulation through DHS that says they can't do that third meal and probably two-thirds to three-fourths of all Boys and Girls Clubs have those kids from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and they're having to stretch their meal allotment for those kids for two meals over that, you know, 12-hour period. If we changed one regulation through DHS that said a Boys and Girls Club can have that third meal and it's just a little tweak in the law then they could have that food delivery through USDA, I believe and we're going to work on that but is it a federal regulation, I'm not sure, or is it state? It has to do with them being clubs, you know, like being clubs and having a closed entry or an open entry. So but that's an easy fix, in my opinion to work on, to get them that third meal. Now why are Boys and Girls Clubs to me so important for this formula? Because Boys and Girls Clubs don't just do a food delivery. They do an education piece all summer long. They make sure those kids have retention over the summer months and they go back to school, you know, not behind but maybe even ahead of where they left off. They give them leadership skills. They do community service. They do physical activities. So I think Boys and Girls Clubs is something we need to tap in to. Thank you.

I also think that another program I've seen is a Literacy with Lunch Bus. I have a school that started taking their school library on the road during the summer and going to key points in their school district and kids would just run out of their houses to check out those books for the week and they've kind of incentivized them by giving them a candy bar at first. That got them to thinking, "Well, these kids are probably hungry during the summer because they don't have that meal." So they started packing them a lunch and giving them the lunch with the school book and now the community pays for that. It isn't a federal program. It's a community-led program. So kids are checking out books, reading, and getting lunch with that. So dual programs where people are having more than one thing go on. I'd like to see us open up regulations where we don't just have a senior center where we have the, you know, them having their lunch by themselves but let them bring the kids in and we have the ability to have the kids eat lunch with their grandparents and keep the funding separate, whatever you have to do but let them eat together and maybe have an activity for the kids. Another thing I would like to see is for the adults, when they come in to have a meal and we certainly need to feed adults at the same time, then let them do some computer skills, let them do reading. Dual programs where we can give people those skills that they need to better themselves.



The Indian Nation, I think that Kathy Webb, who's my mentor on all this, who gives me, you know, a push and keeps me, you know, searching for good ideas, that is the, you know, they're willing to give us something but what can we give them back? Well, I've found that their scores are, on our lottery scholarships, they have the worst retention in college. So how can we, as a state, give back to them and help with their ACT or, you know, it doesn't have to be over lunch. It can be, "How can we help you if you're helping us," and the plate waste. We saw a great program in New Orleans where the kids were actually the tasters for the lunches. They would preview a month's worth of lunches and they would taste. They would tell the cafeteria workers how they could kind of tweak those meals and I think that's a great way for kids to have some ownership and maybe we won't have some plate waste. I would incentivize all this through some grant programs for innovation, for some dual partnerships that have to have dual functions and connect that to the money. I think I'm out of time. [laughter]

Commissioner: Thank you very much for your testimony.

Douglas: Thank you all.

Commissioner: Billy?

Commissioner: I guess my only question is kind of a political question, which is what's your sense in the legislature of how to get more members of the legislature focused around these issues? One of the things we struggle with a lot of these, kind of the national conversation is around education and jobs and economic competitiveness, all for understandable reasons and they said hunger issues is sometimes off to the side a little bit and how do we make it more a higher up on the agenda?

Douglas: Well, we, in Arkansas, our big push this year was connecting the economy to education and it's taken us a while but we have finally figured out that there is a connection there. And so we have great legislation this year that has put those things together, those communities together. So I don't think it's very much of a stretch for us to fold in, you know, these programs that also start out, you know, making sure that kids, you know, people are not, you know, have these hunger issues as well as they're trying to work into the workforce.

Commissioner: Yeah, well, I'm glad to hear you say that. I very much believe that the hunger issues are not just hunger issues but education issues—

Commissioner: Right.

Douglas: Yes.



Commissioner: —that we’ve got to, I think, start to talk about it more that way and convince more people that that tie is not a dotted line, it’s a direct line.

Douglas: I think it’s going to be an easy sell but I’m very optimistic. [laughter]

Commissioner: Nutrition educators would love to hear you say that, your suggestion.

Douglas: Good, good.

Commissioner: We’ve been preaching for years that nutrition and education, you’re talking about food but nutrition and education shouldn’t just be, “here it is,” but should be integrated into things people like to do so I applaud your efforts to do that and wondered if you have any suggestions of really how to get that moving.

Douglas: Well, I think the incentivize the grants. I even think, you know, we raise money as a legislature that goes to our senior centers and our food banks. Maybe we could parcel some of that back and say, “We’ve got some special grants this year and we’re going to do some innovative”—

Commissioner: Develop some models?

Douglas: —yes, and let people come up with things that match their clientele and their areas and not tell them how to do it but let them come up with the ideas.

Commissioner: Very good, thank you.

Commissioner: I have some questions. Thank you very much for your testimony. I haven’t looked at the disparities in food insecurity in Arkansas alone but nationally, there are some major racial and ethnic disparities among households that report food insecurity, among families that have children. African American families and Latino families report rates of food insecurity that are three times that of white families. Now that’s in terms of the burden across the population, there are certainly more white families in sheer numbers that are experiencing food insecurity and I’m certain that there’s food insecurity in various areas of Arkansas that are white, African American, Latino, American Indian, et cetera, but I’m wondering what can you do as a legislator to address the disparities and food insecurity and what should our country be doing to be able to, of course, not make white families more hungry to somehow match the hunger reported among African American and Latino families but what can we do to really help families of different races and ethnicities to reduce their poverty and their food insecurity?



Douglas: Well, I think the poverty is the key and we have to make sure that they have equal access to educational opportunities and we don't just mean college. We've got to open that up to as we have a senator that says, "J," or, "K to J". We don't care what that J is but we just want them to find their passion and be able to get them to that job and we're trying to back that in back down into the eighth grade, so because we realize we're losing them that early and if we can capture them earlier and give them more of a passion, an application-based education, where they have some buy-in. They understand why they're learning it then we hope that we can capture more of these that were dropping out so early and that would include a lot of our minorities. So I think the education piece is going to be a big piece of, you know, stamping out the poverty, which is, you know, the hunger.

Commissioner: One of the things that we witnessed yesterday in Pine Bluff and in Altheimer was that there are schools that are closing down in some of the smaller communities, smaller neighborhoods and have larger schools, I suppose it's more efficient but especially in Altheimer, they, that school closed down in that small community and that, for them, was very devastating from the perspective of people that we spoke with in terms of jobs and opportunities for their children to have activities, to be sort of learning more locally, to be able to feed their children in their own neighborhoods. Can you talk a little bit about what's going on in terms of education in Arkansas and why some of those decisions are getting made and what could be done to improve that situation?

Douglas: Well, in my opinion, decades ago we were very misguided when we decided that bigger schools could do a better job of educating. And we have rethought that in the last legislative session and we've passed legislation that says that a school will not be closed just for numbers and we had done that before. We had said, "If you just reach that 350 number, you're closed but now if you're academically sound, financially sound then just because you reach that number, you will not be closed." So I hope we will save some of those small schools because what we've seen is those kids did not do any better. The academics were not improved. They had a longer bus ride. They could not participate in athletics and afterschool curriculum. They, you know, their parents weren't buying into the system and that led to, you know, an economic bust in the school that was bused. So we devastated some schools in Arkansas because of that and I do think that we have an economic fortitude right now to bring businesses back into those areas and we're trying to make a concerted effort to bring businesses back there before we bring businesses into areas that are flourishing. So a little, maybe a little hope there.

Commissioner: Thank you very much.

Commissioner: Thank you.

Commissioner: Any other questions?



Commissioner: Uh-uh [no].

Commissioner: Thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate it.

Douglas: Thank you.

Commissioner: Okay, this concludes our session of the formal testimonies. We'll be back here at 1:00 for the public testimony. Please, feel free to sign up to have an opportunity to speak directly to the Commission. Thank you very much for being here.