

TESTIMONY TO NATIONAL COMMISSION ON HUNGER

Submitted via email

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Hi, my name is Artrese Morrison, I am the Executive Vice President for Project Open Hand. Every day, thousands of people in the Bay Area are battling serious, life-threatening illnesses. And every day, Project Open Hand is there for them – providing healthy, nourishing meals with love. Accessing healthy food is critical for people who are too sick or frail to shop and cook for themselves. We also provide hot, nutritious meals for seniors to help them tackle the health challenges of old age.

On Monday, June 15th, I spent my day listening to colleagues and the public testifying about hunger issues at the Alameda Administration Building. Many topics were covered including poverty, food stamps, senior meals, school lunch, and even meals for the sick. What I think was glaringly absent from the discussion, especially in the city of Oakland was the role race plays in the cycle of poverty and resources assigned. Oakland, which is a shadow city of San Francisco, has the second highest number of African American residents in CA second to LA. If you compare any of the government fund amounts in almost any category, you will see a noticeable trend that shows Oakland consistently receives less than San Francisco each and every time. This inequity has to change if real progress and real forward movement is to happen.

Because we serve both San Francisco and Alameda counties, we at Project Open Hand see the disparities on a regular basis. A recent study revealed that women of color in Oakland are 40% more likely to die of breast cancer than their Caucasian counterparts. This disparity is largely due to lack of access to services, so we're using our food and nutrition services as a "bridge to care" for women of color with advanced-stage breast cancer.

It is important that as the Commission looks at trying to address the hunger it tries to understand and address the role that racial inequality play in the hunger issue as well.

To learn more about Project Open Hand feel free to contact us at www.openhand.org

Thank you for your consideration,
Artrese Morrison