



Office of the Mayor  
Michael F. Brennan

July 30, 2015

Written Testimony Submitted to the National Commission on Hunger

Dear Commissioners:

Food insecurity is increasingly an issue in our nation, and here in Portland. We can see this through the fact that nearly 55% of students in our public school system qualify for free or reduced price lunch. While I'm proud of the work that we are doing to combat food insecurity here through our food initiative, we must also work on ways to make sure our residents have access to good paying jobs, affordable housing, and access to affordable health care so that they are left with enough to purchase food for their family. That's why I've also been working on increasing the minimum wage in Portland, which the City Council just approved earlier in July, and creating more affordable housing.

I formed the Mayor's Initiative for a Healthy and Sustainable Food System in the summer of 2012 in response to a series of discussions with community members who asked the City to work on our food policy and on increasing residents' access to local foods, and as an outcome of a Community Food Forum hosted by Healthy Portland in April of 2012. Community members present at the forum drafted a purpose and values statement and outlined what they would like to see in a community food council for the City. The current version of that purpose and values statement is included below.

The City of Portland supports a host of initiatives to improve the health and sustainability of the food systems that support our community such as composting programs, community gardens, and the farmers markets. The City also supports increasing access to healthier food at schools, in neighborhoods, and at other community locations. To bolster these initiatives and improve the health and sustainability of the food systems that support our community, our initiative aims to:

- Provide continued and increased public engagement in food-related policies and initiatives;
- Identify and implement positive changes in the community's food systems and policies;
- Prioritize and respond to City and community identified needs for food system change and improvement; and
- Increase access to healthier food for residents.

We are committed to a food system that supports:

- Justice and fairness in all aspects of the food system
- Equal food access for disadvantaged people
- Healthy people
- Thriving local economies and jobs
- Vibrant gardens and farms
- Sustainable ecosystems
- Strong neighborhoods and communities

Portland, Maine



Yes. Life's good here.

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One of my top goals is to have our public schools, universities, and hospitals source up to 50% of their food locally, which will not only provide more local and healthy food for those who eat it, but it will stimulate the local economy and create jobs. If just 15% more of our students bought their lunch at school, that would give us the money to purchase more local food.

The City aspires to produce as much of its own food as possible and supports local growers, processors and workers. We are working to ensure that everyone has enough healthy food and that the healthy food choice is the easier choice. The City intends to support a food system that creates economic opportunity and inspires greater human possibility.

Thank you for coming to Portland today to discuss this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Brennan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Michael F. Brennan, Mayor  
City of Portland