

**Council Testimony from Rainbow Community Development Center  
Presented by Patricia Drumming, Executive Director**

**The Montgomery County Food Security Task Force has created a comprehensive plan outlining our response to food insecurity due to COVID-19 which will serve as a road map for how to allocate the funds**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Council. The Montgomery County Council, DHHS and the Food Council has been doing a tremendous job in ensuring the residents are food secure

70,150 people are estimated to be food insecure 35% of these people are income ineligible for Federal benefit programs and the population keeps going up.

We would like some of these funds to be allocated to provide infrastructure and capacity building for existing smaller hunger-fighting agencies in the County, not only for this year, but every year; resulting in more long-term benefits which can help feed more people.

The Food Security Plan list the following Recommendations

Years Two-Three Recommendations

- ☐ Build capacity of smaller food assistance organizations in high-need “zones” through strategic investments in infrastructure.
- ☐ Deploy new programs via partnerships with retailers and the healthcare system.
- ☐ Reduce transportation related barriers to food access.

That plan was developed in 2016 with the goal of reducing hunger by 22% by 2020. Our hunger-fighting collaborative partner agencies are extremely passionate about providing food to those in need and spend most of their funds into acquiring food

Allocating funds to build capacity and infrastructure can yield the following benefits:

Investing in loading dock ramps can enhance operations of food providers such as Rainbow, Adventist Community Services, Mt. Jezreel and others, reducing the workload

Refrigeration – increase the variety and quantity of food to ensure a well-rounded diet; can save perishables longer making them available for later distributions;

reduce spoilage and waste. Also allows us to take advantage of more perishable donations.

Shelving – At Rainbow and others, if we had the appropriate higher shelving, we could store more shelf-stable food

Forklifts – can ease the workload for loading and unloading trucks without liftgates and help store more food into our warehouses

Transportation – To position our agencies to accept large wholesale donations

These ultimately save time, which frees up key staff to perform other functions such as developing corporate partners, grant-writing, fundraising, capturing data and completing required reports.

If we have the right tools and ability to unload and properly store food, we can take advantage of more donations. During Covid-19, we and groups like Adventist Community Services, have converted some of our other space into food storage space. If we had the appropriate shelving, we could contain in the pantry.

Rainbow partners with 8 agencies in MoCo. When one of our partner agencies is struggling, we work together to ensure that each group has food to distribute to those in need.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. We look forward to your favorable response.