

Food is a basic human right. Let's choose better.

Nelle S. Miller \ President & CEO All Faiths Food Bank
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With last week's passage of the budget reconciliation bill, the U.S. has seen the most significant cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid in a generation.

These changes are more than budget line items; they represent real consequences for real people. For millions of children, seniors, veterans and people with disabilities across the country — including right here in Sarasota and DeSoto counties — this bill will mean less food, less access to health care and more uncertainty at a time when families are already doing all they can to get by.

The new legislation will shift costs to states, impose additional barriers to eligibility and dismantle some of the most effective anti-poverty programs our country has ever known. As a result, people in our community will suffer. At a time when grocery prices remain high, inflation continues to stretch household budgets and food banks are seeing record numbers of people turning to us for help — this bill will have devastating consequences.

At All Faiths Food Bank, we serve neighbors who are working multiple jobs, caring for aging parents, raising children and doing their best to build a stable future. What they need is a strong foundation — access to nutritious food and affordable health care. This legislation pulls the rug out from under them.

We know from experience that good policies reduce hunger. We also know that when policies fail, food banks are left to fill the gap. And while we are proud to do this work, we cannot do it alone.

That said, All Faiths Food Bank is poised programmatically and operationally to meet the needs of our community. We have spent years building a flexible, responsive network of programs that address hunger from every angle: mobile and school pantries, nutrition education programs, healthcare partnerships and wrap around services. We stand ready to help — but the need is rising fast.

We believe food is a basic human right. We believe no one in our community should go hungry.

And we believe that hunger is not inevitable — it's a policy choice. We can choose better.

To do that, we need support. From lawmakers willing to fight for essential programs. From community members ready to lend their time, voice or resources. From every individual who believes that no one should have to choose between feeding their family and paying the bills.

Our neighbors need us now more than ever. As we face this turning point, let's meet it with clarity and compassion. We must come together — as advocates, volunteers, donors and leaders — to protect the programs that keep our neighbors nourished and our community strong.

Our work has never been more vital and, with your help, we will continue to ensure that everyone in our community has the food, health and dignity they deserve.

Nelle S. Miller is the President & CEO of All Faiths Food Bank.

