

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN

February 19, 2019

**Reducing Both Food Waste and Food Insecurity in Los Angeles County**

Many low-income families face barriers to eating enough healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and food high in fiber. In Los Angeles County (County), 561,000 households experience low food security, which is the reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Food insecurity poses short and long-term health risks for children in the County. Food insecurity in childhood is associated with increased risk of developmental delays, social skill impairment, poor academic performance, and early-onset obesity. The link between food insecurity and climbing obesity rates in our County calls for a response ensuring not only that our children have enough food, but also food that is high in nutrients and low in sodium, sugars, and fats.

Every year in Los Angeles County, roughly 1.7 million tons of food are sent to landfills from businesses, schools, and households, accounting for one-third of the state's total food waste stream. Connecting available food to those in need is a win-win: increasing the amount of food that can be re-directed by community and institutional

-MORE-

**MOTION**

SOLIS	_____
RIDLEY-THOMAS	_____
KUEHL	_____
BARGER	_____
HAHN	_____

efforts to address hunger and preventing food from ending up in landfills and contributing to environmental impacts.

Schools offer multiple opportunities to address food waste; for example, since 2018 California schools may establish share tables and food donation programs. Share tables are carts or tables where pupils, staff, and faculty can place unopened prepackaged food, including whole uncut produce, and unopened beverage items that they choose to not eat or drink. These tables provide an opportunity for other pupils to take additional helpings of food or beverages at no cost. Surplus food left on share tables at the end of the meal service may be reused by the school's food service operation or donated to a nonprofit organization. Surplus food from school kitchens may also be donated to any food rescue organization or charitable organization that is tax exempt.

Several school districts in the County have begun to conduct plate waste assessments, establish share tables, and set up donation programs. However, many districts still lack awareness of state and local policies and existing local resources for food waste prevention and recovery. Expanding these efforts in schools across the County requires greater awareness of food waste prevention strategies, assistance with implementation, and connection to existing resources.

Connecting food available in communities, including surplus food from schools, to food rescue organizations and other sources of emergency food in communities, is an important part of reducing food waste and increasing availability of healthy options. Some resources are already available, like the Department of Public Works' free Food Donation and Recovery Outreach Program ("Food DROP"). Among the many resources

it provides, Food DROP has an interactive map to connect available food donations with the organizations that can accept them. Additional efforts can focus on ensuring the health and safety of donated foods and identifying opportunities to further utilize technology to support food recovery.

Food pantries are a significant source of food for many food insecure residents. For example, Los Angeles Regional Food Bank distributes more than 67 million pounds of food annually to over 625 agencies throughout Los Angeles County. To further support availability of healthy foods at food pantries, voluntary standards can be created and adopted for the foods and beverages accepted and offered. With technical assistance and support, County food pantries can develop customized tools to increase availability and uptake of healthier options, or enhance existing efforts, to provide the County's most vulnerable residents with the nutritious food they need.

Addressing food insecurity in the County requires holistic, wrap-around efforts in multiple venues focused on making connections between available resources and those in need.

**I, THEREFORE MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Public Health, in collaboration with Los Angeles County Office of Education, the Department of Public Works, and other relevant stakeholders to increase awareness of and participation in food recovery efforts throughout the County of Los Angeles, focusing on schools and other potential food donors, including opportunities to further leverage systems and technology to increase the amount of food recovered across the County, and report back in 120 days on a plan that includes the following:

- a) Strategies for schools to prevent food waste, redistribute surplus food, and

engage in complementary efforts to address food insecurity in schools;

b) Opportunities for food redistribution in community hubs, such as schools, colleges, clinics, and other settings; and

c) An assessment of the existing landscape of practices and policies in food pantries around nutrition standards, barriers and facilitators of successful implementation of nutrition standards, and sites that can partner to implement nutrition standards.

# # #

JH:jb