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Rising Food Cost Spurs Rising Need at Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania

March 27, 2024 – “At **Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania**, we are currently experiencing the greatest increase in need for food assistance in the last four years,” said Karen Seggi, Chief Executive Officer. Along with higher food prices, Second Harvest and its 376 partner food pantries and meal programs are left with the mission to feed more people with fewer resources.

A recent [Consumer Affairs report](#) showed Pennsylvania ranking #1 in the country for rising food costs. In addition, the newest [USDA food security report](#) showed the highest number of individuals and children experiencing food insecurity nationwide since 2014. These reports confirm the trends at Second Harvest, where there has been a 33% increase in neighbors seeking food assistance in northwest Pennsylvania in the last year. In Erie County, need has increased by 31.5%. At the same time, costs for purchasing food to meet the demand continue to rise. Second Harvest is spending \$3.2 million purchasing food for families in northwest PA, compared to \$1.7 million in 2019. That is a 89% increase in food cost alone.

Inflation extends beyond purchasing meals for our neighbors in need, the cost of storing and transporting food has increased for Second Harvest and its agency partners, too. “You see the increase in food costs every time you walk into a grocery store, and we are seeing how inflation affects not only the Food Bank’s operations, but more importantly, our neighbors,” said Seggi.

One way to help alleviate hunger is to support a strong Farm Bill. With the federal Farm Bill, our lawmakers can come together to ensure no one goes hungry because they’re priced out of affording a meal. The bill includes The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) - a cornerstone to Second Harvest’s food supply and ability to provide meals – and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) - our nation’s best tool for supporting our neighbors facing hunger. Second Harvest calls on our community to contact U.S. Representative Glenn Thompson, U.S. Representative Mike Kelly, U.S. Senator Bob Casey, and U.S. Senator John Fetterman and urge them to support a strong 2023 Farm Bill that enhances these programs.

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About the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania

The mission of the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania is to provide food to those in need within 11 counties of northwest Pennsylvania while creating awareness and educating the community on the realities of hunger. Last year, Second Harvest distributed over 11.5 million pounds of food through an anti-hunger network of 376 partner organizations. Second Harvest serves the following 11 counties in northwest Pennsylvania: Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Venango and Warren.