[*insert date*]

Dear [*insert name of decision maker(s)*],

I am writing to you about a serious public health problem – household food insecurity (HFI). HFI is not having enough money to buy food because of inadequate income. HFI has worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic.

*[Optional - add personal story or local perspective] This issue is important to me because…*

Income solutions are needed to address HFI. The [Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (OPDH)](https://www.odph.ca/)  [*Position Statement and Recommendations on Responses to Food Insecurity*](https://www.odph.ca/odph-position-statement-on-responses-to-food-insecurity-1) explains why.

HFI makes people sick, physically and mentally, and affects their overall well-being. Over 4.4 million Canadians (12.7% of households) didn’t have enough money to buy food in 2017-2018 - higher than any other time.  The work stoppages and job losses from the COVID-19 pandemic mean more people live with HFI. Many people with HFI (65%) have jobs but they are unstable and low paying, or people may live in households where only one person has an income. Job losses due to COVID-19 mean many more households now struggle with lower incomes.

The federal government has brought in a variety of short-term income supports to help people survive financially during COVID-19, but there are gaps. Too many households are being left behind. About 60% of Canadians on social assistance faced HFI in 2017-2018. Because their incomes are so low ($733/month for a single adult receiving Ontario Works), they have the highest rates of severe HFI – they go without food because they don’t have enough money. Households receiving social assistance typically cannot access the funds available to households with income from employment during COVID-19.

Poverty is a significant problem in Canada, and could be for those who lose income or their job on a moment’s notice due to COVID-19. People without enough money for the costs of living need adequate and secure income for the long-term. Canada must have income supports that protect working-age citizens from falling below an income level that meets basic needs. ODPH’s Position Statement shows the importance of:

* Increasing social assistance rates
* Implementing a basic income guarantee
* Creation of jobs with livable wages and benefits
* Affordable housing

*[Optional – add personal story or local perspective]*

[ODPH’s paper](https://www.odph.ca/odph-position-statement-on-responses-to-food-insecurity-1) also explains why food charity is an inadequate and ineffective response to HFI. The federal government has provided hundreds of millions of dollars to food banks and other food charity programs to help cover costs associated with COVID-19. However, these programs do not reduce HFI. Before COVID-19, only about 20% of Canadians with HFI used food banks. HFI is an income problem. Those struggling to buy food are also struggling to pay for rent and other bills. Government support for food charity rather than ensuring adequate income supports so that households can afford to buy food for their families is inefficient, ineffective, and unacceptable.

Please consider the recommendations in [ODPH’s *Position Statement and Recommendations on Responses to Food Insecurity*](https://www.odph.ca/odph-position-statement-on-responses-to-food-insecurity-1). Use the evidence provided to act on household food insecurity in Canada with long-term income solutions. This is the much needed and effective response to persistent poverty and household food insecurity. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Sincerely,

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References:

Tarasuk V, Mitchell A. Household food insecurity in Canada, 2017-18. [Report online]. Toronto, ON: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF); 2020 [cited 2020 November 25]. Available from: <https://proof.utoronto.ca>.

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (ODPH). Position statement and recommendations on responses to food insecurity. [Report online]. 2020. Available from: <https://www.odph.ca/odph-position-statement-on-responses-to-food-insecurity-1>