[*insert return address*]

[*insert date*]

Dear [insert name(s) of MPs/MPPs],

I/We am/are writing to you as an individual/organization deeply concerned about a serious public health problem – household food insecurity (HFI). In 2022, this problem affected more than 6.9 million Canadians including more than 2.8 million Ontarians and will only get worse with recent sky-rocketing inflation. I/We urge you to stand behind income policies that have been proven to effectively reduce food insecurity.

HFI is inadequate or insecure access to food due to household financial constraints. Individuals and families struggling to put food on the table also struggle to afford other basic needs. HFI is a sign of poverty and at its root is the lack of adequate and stable incomes for Canadians to make ends meet. Poverty should not exist in a country as wealthy as Canada, where all citizens should be able to achieve their most basic human needs.

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

Not being able to afford adequate food has profound adverse effects on people’s physical and mental health and the ability to lead productive lives. The health consequences of food insecurity are a large burden on our healthcare system. Using Ontario healthcare cost data, it has been estimated that the 3% of severely food insecure households in Ontario incur an additional $150M per year in healthcare costs compared to those in food secure households.  Effective income policies to reduce food insecurity could offset considerable public expenditures on health care in Canada and improve overall health by: reducing demands on healthcare services, decreasing healthcare costs, creating more equitable communities, reducing social isolation and stigma, supporting economic development, improving community connectedness and enhancing student learning and success.

Food charity is NOT a solution to the problem.  Food banks may provide temporary food relief but do not address the root causes. Only about one-quarter of households experiencing food insecurity go to food banks and for those who do use them, food insecurity does not go away.

Proven income policy solutions to food insecurity include:

* Higher minimum wage rates
* Increasing social assistance rates
* Reducing income tax rates for the lowest income households
* A basic income guarantee

Such income policies preserve dignity, address the root cause of the problem, give choice of which foods to buy and ensure the basic right to food.

As an elected representative, I/we call on you to make poverty reduction a priority. Household food insecurity is an urgent public health problem that, if not addressed, will have serious consequences to the health and well-being of citizens, economic progress, and reputation as a province and country. I/We urge you to stand behind effective income policy solutions that will successfully reduce food insecurity. You have the power to make our province and country a better place for everyone to lead healthier and happier lives.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[City/Town, Province]

References:

Food Insecurity Policy Research (PROOF). [New data on household food insecurity in 2022](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fproof.utoronto.ca%2F2023%2Fnew-data-on-household-food-insecurity-in-2022%2F&data=05%7C01%7CLesley.McMullin%40smdhu.org%7C2d3bfba03a2a41533ad708db78004a7d%7Cff1522bfac0b4820bc4c4c6186b0fc89%7C0%7C0%7C638235714875438131%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=46cnyTe8d1j1DN%2FrlWEVrqGnYC5HlNy%2F17mH4bqmaUk%3D&reserved=0) [webpage online]. Toronto, ON: Food Insecurity Policy Research (PROOF); 2023 May 02 [cited 2023 June 28]. Available from: [https://proof.utoronto.ca/2023/new-data-on-household-food-insecurity-in-2022/](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fproof.utoronto.ca%2F2023%2Fnew-data-on-household-food-insecurity-in-2022%2F&data=05%7C01%7CLesley.McMullin%40smdhu.org%7C2d3bfba03a2a41533ad708db78004a7d%7Cff1522bfac0b4820bc4c4c6186b0fc89%7C0%7C0%7C638235714875438131%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=46cnyTe8d1j1DN%2FrlWEVrqGnYC5HlNy%2F17mH4bqmaUk%3D&reserved=0).

Food Insecurity Policy Research (PROOF). Household Food Insecurity in Canada [webpage online]. Toronto, ON: Food Insecurity Policy Research (PROOF); [cited 2023 June 28]. Available from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/>

Food Insecurity Policy Research (PROOF). Provincial Policy Levers to Reduce Household Food Insecurity, May 2021. Available at: <https://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PROOF_FACTSHEET_Provincial-policies-052021.pdf>

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health. (2020). Position Statement and Recommendations on Responses to Food Insecurity. Available at: <https://www.odph.ca/odph-position-statement-on-responses-to-food-insecurity-1>

Tarasuk V, Li T, Fafard St-Germain AA. (2022). Household food insecurity in Canada, 2021. Toronto, ON: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Available at: <https://proof.utoronto.ca/resources/proof-annual-reports/>

Tarasuk, V. (2017). Implications of a Basic Income Guarantee for Household Food Insecurity. Research Paper 24. Thunder Bay: Northern Policy Institute. Available at: <https://proof.utoronto.ca/resource/implications-of-a-basic-income-guarantee-for-household-food-insecurity/>