



**STATEMENT OF MARK VISO
PRESIDENT & CEO
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**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

APRIL 6, 2023

Chairman Harris, Ranking Member Bishop, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your leadership and the opportunity to provide written testimony. My name is Mark Viso, and I am the President & CEO of Food for the Hungry, a Christian humanitarian organization providing life-changing relief and development programs since 1971. At Food for the Hungry, we design, develop, and deliver catalytic solutions that transform systems so that communities challenged by poverty, injustice, and marginalization have the agency and resources necessary to be resilient and flourish. **I respectfully ask the Subcommittee to provide robust funding for critical international food security programs funded through the Agriculture Appropriations bill, including no less than \$2 billion for Food for Peace Title II, and \$265 million for the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program in Fiscal Year 2024.**

Inspired by our Christian faith, Food for the Hungry walks alongside the most vulnerable people in many of the world's hardest places, sustained and encouraged by Micah 6:8 "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Every day I am honored to meet global brothers and sisters confronting extraordinary challenges and humbled by their remarkable courage and strength. I am inspired by the commitment of our staff and heartened to see the transformative impact of our programs and partnerships.

Through deep relationships within communities, we work alongside the most vulnerable to co-create innovative solutions for sustainable, lasting change. Our diverse partnerships with individuals, churches, corporations, foundations, the U.S. and other donor governments, and various United Nations agencies enable FH to increase our impact and expand our reach, doing more for those we serve. Last year, Food for the Hungry reached nearly 10 million people across more than 3,500 communities in 18 countries experiencing extreme poverty. Through the tireless commitment of our staff, over 99% of whom serve in their country of origin, we are working to rethink global development, transform broken systems, and restore vulnerable communities and families to lives of health and hope.

With conflict both driving and resulting from global food insecurity; climate shocks destroying homes, crops, and livelihoods; and pandemic-era supply chain disruptions continuing to drive up the cost of nutritious food, the global food security crisis of 2022 is sadly not abating. Right now, 828 million people go to bed hungry each night, and a third of the world cannot afford and access a nutritious diet. The World Food Programme projects more than 345 million people will suffer from acute food insecurity this year, more than double pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels. Globally, 43 million people teeter on the brink of famine, and an unprecedented drought in the Horn of Africa has left more than 22 million people at risk of starvation, and more than 5 million children acutely malnourished.

Food for the Hungry works in many of the so-called Hunger Hotspots – vulnerable countries like Ethiopia, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – where fragility, weak institutions, limited or nonexistent social protections, and dependence on significant staple food imports from Russia and Ukraine have combined to produce indescribable suffering. Globally, acute malnutrition in pregnant and breastfeeding women has risen by 25% since 2020. Over 13 million children under age 5 suffer from severe wasting, the deadliest form of malnutrition, and UNICEF estimates the current global food security crisis is pushing one child into severe malnutrition every minute.

These figures are heartbreaking, and each one of them represents a real person currently being robbed of the resources and agency needed for a full, flourishing future. But we can change the status quo. With the political will and public courage of lawmakers like you, the U.S. government can prioritize international food security programs, and increase investments to save lives and livelihoods now while building the long-term resilience necessary to better insulate vulnerable communities and families from future shocks and stresses. The Subcommittee's past support for critical food aid programs confirms that you, too, are moved by present injustices and motivated to mobilize American commodities and investment to address them. Your continued partnership in aiding and empowering the most vulnerable members of our global community is indispensable to the work of Food for the Hungry. Towards that end, we respectfully request the following specific funding amounts in Fiscal Year 2024.

We request \$2 billion for Food for Peace Title II. Implemented by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, Food for Peace programs provide both emergency and development food assistance for communities affected by conflict, climate change, or chronic food insecurity. This funding provides in-kind food donations, locally-procured food, nutrition screening and support, water and sanitation services, and programs that promote household income and dietary diversification. Food for the Hungry is proud to partner with the U.S. government to implement both emergency relief programs and non-emergency programs such as Resilience Food Security Activities and the International Food Relief Partnership program.

We request \$265 million for the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition program. This critical, bipartisan program provides U.S. agricultural commodities to establish school feeding programs for preschool and primary school-aged children in some of the world's most vulnerable communities. Funds also go toward activities designed to improve community health such as water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and targeted interventions to improve maternal and child health during the critical 1,000-day window between pregnancy and a child's second birthday.

We find ourselves at a pivotal moment in history, confronting toxic polarization, a seemingly unending wave of climate catastrophes, growing economic and social injustice, and a worsening global food and cost of living crisis. The last 30 years of democratic advances have been eradicated, and current trends seriously jeopardize our ability to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. This new reality has shocked our collective conscience and forced many of us to confront the same uncertainty, scarcity, and sense of helplessness that many of the world's most vulnerable have known for far too long. But with a bold vision, shared purpose, and continued U.S. leadership, we can meet the moment and overcome these global challenges.

Robust funding for international food assistance programs saves lives and creates a safer and more prosperous future for us all. It serves as an important reflection of our values and critical reminder to both friends and foes of American strength and generosity, while galvanizing increased investment and commitment from partners and allies. Now is the time to continue such leadership. As an organization seeking to transform lives, families, and communities “so the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth” (Job 5:16), Food for the Hungry stands ready to partner with you in this critical work.