

**STATEMENT OF MARK VISO  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY**

**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED  
AGENCIES  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**May 7, 2024**

Chairman Heinrich, Ranking Member Hoeven, 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 build resilience so that children, families, and communities can flourish. **In light of growing global needs, I respectfully ask the Subcommittee to provide robust funding for critical international food and nutrition security programs funded through the Agriculture Appropriations bill and administered by USAID and USDA, including no less than \$1.8 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 2025.**

Inspired by our Christian faith, Food for the Hungry is honored and privileged to serve vulnerable families and communities in many of the world's most fragile contexts. In the face of spiraling global conflicts, a worsening hunger and malnutrition crisis, ongoing climate shocks, and growing economic uncertainty and political instability, we remain committed to transforming lives "so the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth" (Job 5:16).

In my role, I am honored to meet global brothers and sisters overcoming extraordinary challenges and humbled by their remarkable resolve to forge a better, brighter future for themselves and their families. From Ethiopia to Haiti and beyond, I am profoundly moved by the steadfast and selfless commitment of our staff and heartened to see the transformative impact of our programs and partnerships. As the needs of those suffering from poverty, marginalization, and injustice have grown in scale and complexity in recent years, I have been grateful to lead Food for the Hungry on a journey to reimagine international development and our role within it, questioning long-held assumptions, seeking creative and innovative solutions, and recommitting ourselves to centering the experiences, needs, and desires of those individuals, families, and communities we are privileged to serve.

The deep, trusted relationships enjoyed by our local staff enable Food for the Hungry to catalyze transformational change in even the hardest of places, encouraged and sustained by Micah 6:8 "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." By partnering with the

communities we serve, we deliver shareholder-led development that prioritizes local needs and sustainable solutions that result in resilient, flourishing communities.

Just as the depth of our longstanding local relationships distinguishes Food for the Hungry, informing our innovative program model and animating our future state, so too our diverse partnerships with individuals, churches, corporations, foundations, the U.S. and other donor governments, and various United Nations agencies is a defining feature of Food for the Hungry, enabling us to leverage the resources entrusted to us for greatest impact. In 2023, Food for the Hungry reached nearly 10 million people in 18 countries experiencing extreme poverty, creating more than \$14 million in assets, delivering improved nutrition to over half a million young women and mothers, ensuring access to clean water for over 700,000 people, and training over 40,000 community change agents in gender dignity and child protection. Through the tireless commitment of our staff, over 99% of whom serve in their country of origin, we are transforming broken relationships and systems, and restoring vulnerable communities and families to lives of health and hope.

Still, we are reminded daily that the global food security crisis is, sadly, not abating. Right now, 783 million people face chronic hunger, with nearly 300 million people experiencing acute food insecurity requiring immediate assistance. More than a third of the world cannot afford and access sufficient nutritious food. Globally, nearly 150 million children suffer from stunted growth and development due to a chronic lack of essential nutrients, while more than 45 million children suffer from wasting, the most severe and life-threatening form of malnutrition. The number of people on the brink of famine has doubled since just last year.

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 and nutrition 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 empowering the most vulnerable members of our global community is indispensable to the work of Food for the Hungry. Toward that end, we urge swift passage of a bipartisan Farm Bill that bolsters flexibility for critical food and nutrition security programs so that we are able to deliver aid most effectively, tailoring our response to local needs and realities. We also respectfully request the following specific funding amounts in Fiscal Year 2025.

We request \$1.8 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 commodity donations, locally-procured food, nutrition screening and support, water and sanitation services, and programs that promote 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 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 climate chaos, growing economic and social injustice, and a worsening hunger and malnutrition crisis. Rising instability, democratic backsliding, and current donor 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 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 a critical reminder of American strength and generosity, while galvanizing increased investment and engagement from partners and allies. Now is the time to continue such leadership. As an organization called to "feed the hungry and satisfy those who are in need" (Isaiah 58:10), Food for the Hungry stands ready to partner with you in this urgent work.