

**STATEMENT OF MARK VISO
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**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN
OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

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Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Graham, 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 development, humanitarian, and global health programs at USAID and the Department of State, including no less than \$1.2 billion for the Global Food Security Strategy, also known as Feed the Future; \$300 million for Nutrition within Global Health Programs; \$1.15 billion for Maternal and Child Health; \$500 million for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene; and \$985 million for Basic Education. I also request \$4.85 billion for International Disaster Assistance; \$4.77 billion for Development Assistance; and \$4.30 billion for the Economic Support Fund 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 polycrisis continues. 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. Estimates suggest that 19 million children missed out on routine but life-saving immunizations due to the pandemic. 70% of children in low and middle-income countries experience learning poverty, unable to read and comprehend a simple text by age 10. Over 2 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water. Current estimates suggest over 130 million people will be forcibly displaced from their homes this year. 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, and every day, more than 13,000 children and 800 women die from preventable causes.

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 increase foreign assistance 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 relief and development programs confirms that you, too, are moved by present injustices and motivated to mobilize the full force of the U.S. government to fight poverty and human suffering. 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 respectfully request the following specific funding amounts in Fiscal Year 2025.

We request \$1.2 billion for the Global Food Security Strategy, also known as Feed the Future. A multiagency effort focused on addressing the root causes of hunger, poverty and malnutrition, Feed the Future works in twenty high-need, low-resource, focus countries to develop and deploy agricultural innovations, unlock financing for food security, and empower people to feed

themselves and nourish the next generation. Feed the Future also supports research and technical assistance aimed at reducing communities' vulnerability to food shocks and stresses, thereby building capacity and resilience. Since its inception, Feed the Future has helped smallholder farmers generate more than \$28 billion in sales, and just last year the program reached over 29 million people with food security interventions and 32 million children with nutrition-specific interventions.

We request \$300 million for the Nutrition subaccount within Global Health Programs. Though nearly half of all deaths in children under five are attributable to malnutrition, less than 0.4% of U.S. foreign assistance is spent on its prevention and treatment. The Nutrition subaccount plays a central role in turning the tide against malnutrition by targeting action during the important 1,000-day window between pregnancy and a child's second birthday. Focusing on low-cost, high-impact interventions such as nutrition education, breastfeeding support, multiple micronutrient supplementation, and the prevention and treatment of stunting and wasting, this funding supports the long-term physical and cognitive development of some of the world's most vulnerable women and children.

We request \$1.15 billion for Maternal and Child Health within Global Health Programs. This funding supports programs aimed at ending preventable maternal and child deaths through the strengthening of health systems and routine immunizations as well as the treatment of disease and integration of safe water, sanitation, and hygiene practices. Maternal and Child Health funding also provides access to skilled birth attendants and quality obstetric care, as well as training for frontline health workers.

We request \$500 million for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH). Key for improved health and poverty reduction, WASH funding increases access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, while promoting the adoption of key hygiene behaviors. It also supports climate-resilient conservation of freshwater resources, as well as efforts focused on reducing water-related conflict and fragility.

We request \$985 million for Basic Education. Basic education programs increase access to and improve the quality of education in low- and middle-income countries. Through teacher training, expanded education delivery, and other supports designed to aid children's acquisition of reading, math, and other foundational learning skills, this funding helps ensure children and young people fulfill their full potential and lead productive, successful lives.

We request \$4.85 billion for International Disaster Assistance (IDA). IDA funds provide critical humanitarian services including food, water, shelter, health care and protection in times of natural disaster, conflict, and insecurity. They also help improve countries' response to crises and reduce underlying risks and vulnerabilities. Food for the Hungry is proud to have partnered with the U.S. government to implement IDA-funded Emergency Food Security Programs as well as non-food security responses such as water, sanitation, and hygiene.

We request \$4.77 billion for Development Assistance (DA). DA funds support long-term poverty reduction programs focused on food security; water, sanitation, and hygiene; livelihoods;

education; and climate programs. These funds are critical to the development of resilient, self-reliant, equitable, and democratic societies worldwide.

We request \$4.30 billion for the Economic Support Fund (ESF). ESF funds provide economic assistance to help countries meet urgent political, economic, development, and security needs. This includes programs to combat human trafficking, fight corruption, increase transparent governance, and protect fundamental human rights. Food for the Hungry is proud to have partnered with the U.S. government to implement innovative COVID-19 response programs through ESF.

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 relief and development 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.