

Mayoral Food Questionnaire

In 2026 food organizations local to the District convened to elevate food issues in the Mayoral election.

The [DC Food Forum](#) exists to ensure candidates engage deeply with the realities of food access, equity, and sustainability in DC. We seek to elevate the voices and lived experiences of residents, surface the root causes of food inequities, and secure clear commitments to addressing them. Through a united, nonpartisan coalition, we aim to make candidate priorities transparent and advance accountability for a more just food system.

Partners:

- Dreaming Out Loud
- DC Green Scheme
- DC Jail Food Working Group
- DC Hunger Solutions
- FRESHFARM
- DC Greens
- DC Good Food Purchasing Program

Email *

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Candidate Name *

Janeese Lewis George (please disregard earlier submission)

Food Access & Retail

The Nourish DC and Food Access Fund programs distributed \$23 million to food retail in Wards 5, 7, and 8, but FY2026 is the last year of federal funding. Do you commit to funding these programs to sustain food retail in low-access areas?

Yes

No

Other: _____

Existing District incentives have not yet addressed the grocery gap in Wards 7 & 8 east of the river. How would you expand and sustain full-service food retail in these communities? What concrete commitments will you make to ensure that community-rooted groups—like our Ward 7 and 8 [Community Advisory Board](#)—have real authority and influence in shaping the District’s food and health equity agenda?

I see improving access to affordable and healthy food – with an emphasis on locally sourced food – as critical to supporting affordability, public health, equity, and equitable economic development. I commit to improving DC’s food system by bringing more affordable food retail to the most underserved DC communities, especially in Wards 7 and 8. That will include full-service grocery stores but also could include farmers markets – building on legislation the Council adopted to support markets in areas with low food access – as well as mobile markets, pop-up opportunities and more.

I pledge to engage community organizations and members, including the Community Advisory Board and the Food Policy Council, from the onset of planning new grocery retail and to continue that engagement after stores and other retail sites open, to address issues such as siting, essential food offerings, hiring from the community, parking, and other community needs.

Too often, DC has had ineffective grocery subsidies, including tax breaks that were not enough to incentivize stores in an equitable way and instead provided tax breaks for stores that didn’t need it. And there have been instances where developers got subsidies and promised a grocery store and then never delivered. I will explore a full range of grocery options – including leveraging DC property at St. Elizabeth’s, Capitol Gateway, Poplar Point, RFK and beyond – and I will develop public-private financing options that are at the scale needed to make stores viable in communities that lack access to affordable grocery options.

My goal is to bring retail grocery options in a way that supports equity, sustainability, and locally sourced food as much as possible. Expanding access to affordable groceries should go beyond solely bringing a few major chain stores east of the Anacostia River. Expanding grocery retail should also be about local wealth building, with dollars re-invested in the community rather than elsewhere. That includes exploring grocery co-op options and other markets that feature locally grown and prepared food.

Federal Food Benefits & the Safety Net

Would you guarantee a multi-year commitment to DC's participation in SUN Bucks, ensuring SNAP- and Medicaid-eligible families can access federal funds for groceries during the summer?

Yes

No

Other: _____

Federal changes through H.R. 1 will expose approximately 140,000 DC SNAP clients to new work requirements and time limits for the first time in over 27 years, shift significant administrative and benefit costs to the District, and cut eligibility for asylum seekers and refugees. DC food prices have also [risen 4%](#) over the past year. How would you protect DC residents' access to food benefits, and how would you use the District's local supplement authority to address gaps in federal coverage?

As a Council member, I worked to fund the Give SNAP a Raise legislation, to supplement federal SNAP benefits that are not adequate anywhere but especially in DC, and I was outraged that the mayor did not support it.

My top priority as mayor will be to limit the number of residents who are at risk of losing benefits due to unhelpful and unrealistic work participation requirements. Any implementation of new federal work requirements must prioritize keeping eligible residents enrolled rather than creating administrative barriers that push people off benefits. I'll expand the waiver eligibility to include all options and will work to expand the definition of unfit to work

I'll invest in staffing at DHS needed to help recipients maintain benefits and I'll invest in nonprofits to increase their capacity to identify SNAP recipients who should be exempted from work requirements. I will expand SNAP Employment and Training providers and will ensure all DC workforce development agencies are able to support SNAP recipients – to get the required hours or seek an exemption. I will require DC agencies that may be able to provide volunteer opportunities to create volunteer opportunities for SNAP recipients – like DPR and DC Public Library – and work with non-profit partners to provide volunteer opportunities that can meet the SNAP requirements and create an online database of volunteer opportunities.

And I continue to be concerned that SNAP allotments for those who continue to get them are not enough to afford a healthy and adequate diet, and I remain committed to addressing that.

Institutional Food — Schools & Agencies

Do you support expanding Universal School Meals — covering breakfast and lunch at no cost — to all DC schools participating in the National School Lunch Program, including public, charter, and private schools?

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

The Secure DC Act directed the Department of Corrections to improve nutrition standards and create workforce opportunities around food, but implementation has gone nowhere due to lack of funding. Do you commit to funding these reforms?

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

From school cafeterias to jails to homeless shelters to DC agencies, the District serves food to thousands of residents every day. How would you raise the quality and nutritional standards of that food, expand the [Good Food Purchasing Program](#) to all DC agencies, and ensure that public food dollars support both local businesses and community values?

The food DC procures for schools, the DC Jail, and other places is not just another contract, where we should look for the lowest bidder. As a provider of food through multiple agencies, the District has an opportunity and obligation to support healthy diets – with plenty of fruits and vegetables and reduced use of highly-processed food – and to support our local economy and entrepreneurs, environmental sustainability, good jobs, and animal welfare.

As mayor, I will ensure DC meets federal nutrition standards in all food we procure, and I will explore ways to go above and beyond where those standards are not ambitious enough. I will empower the DC Food Policy Council Director and Office of Food Policy to coordinate all DC agencies around improving food procurement. I will expand Good Food Purchasing Program standards beyond DCPS so that more District agencies align their food procurement with those values over time. I will expand existing efforts to collaboratively purchase food across DC agencies to lower costs and increase efficiencies, as a step toward Central Food Processing. I will work to increase the DC government's relationship with local food providers – both fresh food and prepared food – to develop a clear pipeline for sourcing food locally across all agencies, with an emphasis on organizations owned by people of color and women. I will work to set standards for food providers around wages and working conditions and environmental sustainability. And I will develop a reporting system to transparently document where DC gets its food and the quality of that food.

Food, Health & Community

DC's urban farms serve as both critical food sources and community gathering spaces. Do you commit to robust support for urban agriculture, including working directly with growers to reduce the regulatory barriers that make it difficult to sell food locally and regionally?

Yes

No

Other: _____

Fresh produce and food access are increasingly recognized as clinical interventions that reduce health disparities. How would you embed "Food is Medicine" programs into DC's budget and healthcare systems, and what steps would you take to ensure that a resident's health is no longer largely determined by their race or zip code?

Population-level health and food access are the core of "food is medicine." My commitment to SNAP expansion, healthy food retail, and coordination between nonprofit food providers is the baseline of ensuring that every resident can obtain the food they need for a healthy life. I support DC's Produce Rx program and will work as Mayor to expand the use of healthy-food prescriptions, medically tailored meals, and nutrition incentive programs as a core part of health care delivery through DC's Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) and our network of hospitals and health clinics. This includes allowing food prescriptions for every eligible population as a reimbursable expense in Medicaid and the Healthcare Alliance requiring all MCOs to develop plans for incorporating food prescriptions, nutrition incentives, food and nutrition education, and other efforts in their delivery systems, and convening MCOs and partners for implementation. I will fund the tracking of food access that was cut by USDA.

Composting & Food Waste

Do you commit to expanding residential curbside composting to all DC households, including multifamily buildings, and requiring District agencies that serve food to compost their organics?

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

What timeline would you set for expanding composting to multifamily homes:

I will work to fund this in my first budget, beginning with an opt-in and phased approach for multifamily buildings. I will also expand smart food waste drop-off bins in areas with a high concentration of multifamily housing

What timeline would you set for expanding composting to food businesses:

I'll work with the business community to set an ambitious but realistic timeline, ideally under 2 years. I'll expand technical assistance, especially to smaller food businesses.

What timeline would you set for expanding composting to DC agencies:

My first year in office. I will start with DCPS and expand outward.

Your Food Vision for DC

The Mayor's Proposed FY27 budget cuts the Food Policy team. If elected would you continue to invest in our city's food needs by supporting this work in the budget and the Food Policy Council?

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

In your first year in office, will you personally taste-test food served at DC agencies — including schools, shelters, and the Department of Corrections?

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

Will you commit to holding a roundtable with this coalition before taking office to discuss resident-driven priorities around food access, nutrition, and food systems?

Yes

No

Other: _____

What food-related priorities — not covered above — would define your administration, and what would you want DC's food system to look like by the end of your term?

My first year in office. I will start with DCPS and expand outward.

Is there anything you would like to expand upon?

No. Thank you again for this opportunity to engage in this critical conversation.

This form was created inside of Max Broad.

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