

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

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Candidate Name *

Kenyan R. McDuffie

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:

I will continue to fund these programs. The Nourish DC and Food Access Fund investments have been critical to sustaining food retail in Wards 5, 7, and 8, and I am committed to preserving that progress. However, the District faces a \$1.1 billion budget deficit, and I am mindful of those fiscal realities. I will make food access a budget priority, work across agencies to identify sustainable funding mechanisms, and be honest with communities about the path forward.

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?

The grocery gap east of the river is one of the clearest examples of how policy choices, structural and institutional racism have shaped who gets access to basic necessities in this city.

I will go further than offering tax incentives or zoning tweaks. As Mayor, I will direct my administration to conduct a rigorous review of why existing incentive programs have not attracted full-service grocery options to Wards 7 and 8, and I will use that analysis to redesign those programs from the ground up. Part of that redesign will address existing barriers, such as the need to better engage property owners as partners in filling vacant spaces, in addition to addressing the rising utility costs and high rents that make it difficult for retailers to sustain a viable business model east of the river.

As Councilmember, I worked closely with DSLBD to create and fund programs such as the Healthy Food Retail Program, which brought fresh produce into thirty small retail stores and pop-up grocery stores in Wards 7 and 8; the Grown in DC Initiative, which funded local farmers markets and small food vendors; and the Neighborhood Prosperity Fund, which helped bring projects like Good Food Markets to Ward 8. These were necessary but ultimately short-term solutions. That’s why I also supported long-term strategies like tax incentives and subsidies so nonprofits and business owners can afford District-owned space to anchor grocery store tenants where traditional financing would not work.

As Mayor, I will approach food access as a public health issue. I will expand "food as medicine" programs, including medically tailored meals and nutrition support for residents with high-risk chronic conditions, and I will pursue DC's Medicaid 1115 waiver to unlock federal dollars for produce prescriptions and nutrition counseling. I will use District-owned land and long-term below-market leases to attract and sustain food retail, prioritizing retailers who can demonstrate a sustainable business model with a genuine range of healthy food options, not just a store that opens and within months shifts to packaged goods because fresh produce does not pencil out.

The Ward 7 and 8 Community Advisory Board will have a formal seat in that process, with real input on site selection, retailer standards, and accountability measures. Advisory roles that have no binding weight are insufficient. The Community Advisory Board will shape outcomes, not just comment on them.

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:

SUN Bucks provides eligible school children with a \$120 grocery benefit that families can use to purchase food during the summer months when schools are closed. DC has already distributed SUN Bucks benefits to nearly 70,000 students in the 2025 cycle, with over \$8 million invested in local stores and farmers markets across the District. I will push for a multi-year commitment to DC's participation in SUN Bucks. Families should be able to plan around this benefit year after year, and I will work to lock in that continuity so no child loses grocery support because the District failed to act.

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?

Federal changes to the safety net represent a direct threat to the food security of approximately 140,000 DC residents, and I will use every tool available at the local level to protect them. New work requirements will strip eligibility from adults who cannot meet burdensome documentation demands, and new time limits will cut off families in genuine need before they achieve stability. Research from the Urban Institute projects that families in DC losing at least \$25 per month in SNAP benefits will lose an average of \$231 per month, the equivalent of roughly 40 meals. Unless the District acts, many more residents will continue to face extreme hunger.

DC's local supplement authority is a meaningful tool to reduce hunger and as Mayor, will actively use this important tool. I will work to expand local food assistance to cover residents cut off from federal benefits, including asylum seekers and refugees who have historically called this city home. Food prices have risen 4% over the past year, and that cost pressure compounds the harm of federal cuts. I will also work with the Council to establish a dedicated line item for local food assistance so that our response to federal rollbacks is grounded in stable, recurring appropriations rather than emergency supplemental spending year over year. Protecting residents' access to food is a core function of city government.

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:
I will direct my administration to fund these reforms. The Secure DC Act pointed the Department of Corrections toward better nutrition standards and food-related workforce opportunities, and allowing that mandate to go unfunded is unacceptable. These are not optional improvements. I will prioritize funding for implementation and hold the agency accountable for delivering results. _____

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 serves across its institutions reflects the values of this government, and right now those values are falling short. I will direct my administration to expand the Good Food Purchasing Program across DC agencies that serve food, including schools, shelters, and correctional facilities. The Program's core values, including local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare, and community health, align directly with how I want this city to spend its public dollars. I will establish clear agency procurement targets and a public reporting dashboard so residents can see whether we are meeting our commitments. I will also work to build direct relationships between DC institutions and local food businesses, particularly those owned by residents from the communities those institutions serve. Government purchasing power is a lever for building local wealth and improving public health at the same time.

All residents, and persons under the care of the District deserve access to nutritious meals. As Mayor, I will budget for improvements. I will also expand hospitality job training inside facilities, because employment is the strongest predictor of successful reentry.

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?

Treating food as a clinical intervention is one of the most cost-effective investments DC can make in health equity. I will embed Food is Medicine programming into DC's budget and healthcare systems by directing agencies to expand medically tailored meal programs for residents managing high-risk chronic conditions. I will align this work with the District's Medicaid program and push for reimbursement pathways that allow providers to issue produce prescriptions and nutrition supports as part of standard care.

The fact that a resident's health outcomes are still largely predicted by their race and zip code is a policy failure, and I will treat it as one. I will require Health Equity Impact Audits on any new health regulation that affects access for Ward 7 and 8 residents, and I will direct resources toward community health workers and peer navigators embedded in clinics serving those communities. A system in which your address determines how long you live is a broken system. As Mayor, I will fix it.

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:

I am committed to expanding residential curbside composting to all DC households, including multifamily buildings, and I will require District agencies that serve food to compost their organics. DC has fallen behind on waste diversion, and this is a concrete step I will take to fix that.

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

In my first 100 days, I will convene a cross-agency working group to produce a concrete implementation plan for expanding composting to multifamily buildings, food businesses, and DC agencies that serve food. That plan will include sequenced rollout timelines, funding requirements, and a public accountability structure. I have a prior record of supporting the Zero Waste Omnibus Act and a curbside organic waste collection program, and I will build on that foundation. No resident, business, or agency should be left out of composting access because the District failed to plan.

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

[Same as above] In my first 100 days, I will convene a cross-agency working group to produce a concrete implementation plan for expanding composting to multifamily buildings, food businesses, and DC agencies that serve food. That plan will include sequenced rollout timelines, funding requirements, and a public accountability structure. I have a prior record of supporting the Zero Waste Omnibus Act and a curbside organic waste collection program, and I will build on that foundation. No resident, business, or agency should be left out of composting access because the District failed to plan.

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Your Food Vision for DC

The Mayors 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?

Connecting food access to economic mobility is a priority my administration will pursue with real urgency. As a Councilmember, I championed guaranteed income pilots and the Connector Card program, which helps seniors and older returning citizens access grocery stores and medical appointments. When residents lack reliable income or transportation, even the best food access programs fall short.

Hunger also undermines educational outcomes directly. A child who comes to school hungry cannot focus and cannot learn. My administration will treat ending childhood hunger as an education investment, aligning school meal programs and family food security supports with our broader strategy for improving attendance and academic achievement.

As Mayor, I will bring together SNAP outreach, workforce development, and neighborhood investment in the same geographic strategy. I will use the District's purchasing power to grow DC-based food producers and vendors in our institutional supply chains, and deliberately build the capacity of local entrepreneurs to fill gaps across the food system by connecting them to capital, technical assistance, and contracting opportunities so they can grow and hire locally.

Is there anything you would like to expand upon?

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