

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 *



Candidate Name *

Rini Sampath

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?

The existing incentive structure has not worked because it has not been paired with real community authority over how and where investment goes. As Mayor, I will streamline permitting for grocery operators in food-insecure areas, use public land disposition and tax incentives to attract and sustain full-service grocery in Ward 7 and 8 commercial corridors, and give the Community Advisory Board real decision-making power, not advisory-only status. Communities east of the river have been consulted and ignored for decades. My administration will operate differently: residents shape the agenda, not just comment on it.

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?

H.R. 1 is a direct attack on 140,000 DC SNAP clients and I will fight it on every front available. I will support the Attorney General in challenging unlawful federal benefit restrictions in court. I will use DC's local supplement authority to fill gaps for residents cut off by new work requirements and time limits, with particular attention to asylum seekers and refugees who will lose eligibility entirely. I will also direct DHCF and DAFL to launch an aggressive outreach and enrollment campaign so every eligible resident is connected to every benefit they are entitled to. Food prices are up 4 percent in the past year while federal support is being cut. That math falls hardest on the lowest-income families.

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?

I will expand the Good Food Purchasing Program to all DC agencies in my first term, starting with the agencies serving the most meals: DCPS, the Department of Corrections, and homeless shelters. Public food dollars should support local producers, fair labor standards, environmental sustainability, and nutritious food simultaneously. That is what the Good Food Purchasing Program framework delivers. I will also personally taste-test food served at DC agencies, including schools, shelters, and the Department of Corrections, because accountability starts with showing up.

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?

I will embed Food is Medicine programs into DC's budget and healthcare systems by directing DHCF to cover medically tailored meals as a Medicaid benefit for residents managing chronic conditions, starting with the highest-need populations in Wards 7 and 8 where diet-related disease rates are highest. I will also publish a ward-level health and food access map annually through DOEE so that the connection between zip code, food access, and health outcomes is visible and drives investment decisions. A resident's health should not be determined by their race or neighborhood. Making that true requires tracking it honestly and investing where the disparities are worst.

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:

Year two of my administration, following an infrastructure assessment and outreach plan in year one

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

Year two, phased by business size, with large food businesses first and small businesses supported with technical assistance.

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

Year one. Government should lead by example. I will require all food-serving agencies to compost their organics starting in my first budget cycle.

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?

By the end of my term, I want DC to have a food system where no child goes hungry at school, no senior goes without a nutritious meal because of a wait list or a language barrier, and no resident in Ward 7 or 8 has to travel more than a mile for fresh produce. I will get there by treating food access as infrastructure, connecting institutional purchasing to local producers, protecting the safety net from federal cuts with local dollars, and giving community-rooted organizations real authority over how food policy gets made. Food justice is not a separate agenda. It is inseparable from housing, health, economic opportunity, and racial equity. I will govern like that is true.

Is there anything you would like to expand upon?

DC's food system reflects every inequality in the city: by ward, by race, by income, by age. Fixing it requires the same approach I bring to every challenge: clear accountability, transparent data, investment targeted where the need is greatest, and community voices with real authority. I am committed to building that food system, and I look forward to being held to it.

This form was created inside of Max Broad.

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