DC Food Platform

We, the undersigned organizations, have united to share pressing needs and collective values for a better food system in the District.

Food is a defining pillar of equity, health, and economic stability in DC. Across our city, residents are navigating rising food prices, deep grocery gaps, diet-related health challenges, and structural barriers to nutritious, affordable, culturally meaningful food. We offer this platform as a roadmap for a mayoral administration committed to building a safe, resilient, values-driven food system, a city that:

- enables food sovereignty and resident-led solutions;
- protects and expands access to SNAP and other nutrition benefit programs;
- invests in urban agriculture;
- expands access to school meals and strengthens school nutrition;
- improves carceral nutrition in DC Jail;
- embeds Food Is Medicine into healthcare;
- strengthens locally-owned businesses, especially those providing essential access to produce and nutrient-dense options in food apartheid neighborhoods; and
- ensures that our most marginalized and under-resourced communities have participatory self-determination in shaping the District's food future.

Central to this work is restoring and fully supporting the Food Policy Council and fully staffing a food systems team, including a Food Policy Director, ensuring the District has the coordinated leadership, cross-agency expertise, and community-rooted governance required to advance these priorities.

We stand ready to work with you to make these commitments real for every DC resident.

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1. Our Local Food Economy

With DC food prices having risen 4% over the past year, the Mayor can sustain affordable food retail in low-access areas by fully supporting Nourish DC and Food Access Funding, provide technical assistance and funding to retailers seeking to expand produce offerings and meet new SNAP requirements, and create public-private partnerships that can bring down cost at existing retailers through both existing programs and new initiatives. The District should pursue comprehensive community food infrastructure that includes supermarkets, locally owned and cooperative retailers such as “municipal groceries”, farmers markets and urban agriculture, community food hubs, delivery models, and other innovative community-owned food enterprises. Develop DC's food and nutrition workforce through streamlined licensing and permitting, technical assistance, access to capital and procurement opportunities, and workforce training and youth career pathways. Make the attraction and retention of full-service supermarkets in Wards 7 and 8 east of the river a mayoral priority, with clear goals, incentives, and accountability measures to improve access to affordable, healthy food. Allow food retail (without alcohol) in residential and mixed-use areas to increase neighborhood food access and density in priority areas, and ensure Community Benefits Agreements that explicitly hold developers accountable to building food retail in buildings they promise will have it. Ensure that tax incentives provided to grocers meaningfully drive retailers to attempt to meet WIC requirements and participate in food donation efforts locally.

2. Protect and Expand Access to Food Benefits

Guarantee a multi-year commitment to DC's participation in SUN Bucks so that agencies, organizations, and families can prepare appropriately. Ensure that all local food benefit programs are able to expand as costs of food expand. Protect DC residents' access to food benefits by expanding workforce

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programs, SNAP Employment & Training, and specifically expanding DOES services for Older Adults, parents returning to the workforce after a childcare gap, and using the District's authority to provide local food benefit supplements to address gaps created by federal exposure to new restrictions.

3. Incorporating Wards 7 & 8 East of the River and the Community Voice

Facilitating community involvement in food systems priorities is critical to building trust and creating resilient systems. Mechanisms to ensure that residents—particularly those in Wards 7 and 8 and communities experiencing the greatest food and health inequities—have meaningful influence over priorities, investments, implementation, and evaluation include recurring Ward-level food-system forums; compensated resident advisors; youth representatives; multilingual engagement; public response requirements documenting how community recommendations were acted upon; participatory approaches to setting food-system priorities; and representation from people with lived experience of SNAP, WIC, school meals, Food Is Medicine, urban agriculture, and other District food programs. Ensure that community-rooted groups—like GW's two Ward 7 and 8 Community Advisory Boards, The Green Scheme, and others—have meaningful authority and influence in shaping the District's food agenda. Mechanisms that can help with transparency and community partnership include for the DC Food Policy Council to have a public food-system dashboard with annual progress reporting, tracking how public food dollars benefit locally owned businesses, and measurable four-year goals.

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4. Youth as the District's Food Future

Establish Universal School Meals to cover breakfast and lunch at no cost to all DC schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program, including public, charter, and private schools. Meals should be nutritious, culturally meaningful, appetizing, and actually eaten; include students and parents in menu development, evaluation, and oversight. Maintain and expand the DC Public Schools self-operation program, which -- if expanded -- could lower costs, increase uptake of meals, and increase local purchasing, especially if combined with a Central Food Processing Facility. Provide dedicated funding for school food pantries that supply students and families with groceries, snacks, and essential items. Fund garden-based education and kid-driven green spaces at schools, recreation centers, and public housing sites, prioritizing Title 1 schools and high-need neighborhoods. Support a capacity-building model in which community partners provide technical assistance, training, and coaching so that schools, educators, and students own and lead their programs. Include compensated roles in the DC Food Policy Council and urban agriculture programs, with deliberate inclusion of youth from Wards 7 and 8, Title 1 middle and high schools, and other communities most affected by food and health inequities. Establish a DC Youth Food Policy Council with a formal advisory relationship to the Mayor and Food Policy Council. Fund multi-year, year-round grants that cover technical assistance and programming for youth-led food enterprises and urban agriculture where high school students grow, market, and sell food while earning income and building business, leadership, and green-career skills.

5. DC Jail Food

Improve the Department of Corrections' nutrition practices and standards, transition food in the jail away from privatized food service management companies, implement values-based local procurement, and create workforce

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opportunities around food, including funding provisions that exist in current legislation.

6. Values-Based Food Procurement

To raise the quality and nutritional standards of District food, expand the Good Food Purchasing Program to all DC agencies, and ensure that public food dollars support both local businesses and community values. To facilitate local sourcing and processing, establish a Central Food Processing Facility. Taste-test food served at DC agencies, including schools, shelters, and the Department of Corrections to determine appropriate quality. To understand the value chain and support better food service from contractors, publicly report on where DC's institutional food dollars go, what is purchased, and from where.

7. Urban Agriculture

Support urban agriculture and work directly with growers to reduce the regulatory barriers that make it difficult to sell food locally and regionally. Expand access to public land for urban agriculture through clear pathways to access public and vacant land, technical assistance, and long-term leases that enable farmers and growers to make sustained investments. Streamline the process for accessing water at farm and garden sites. Provide increased funding for urban farms and community wellness spaces that improve food access, health, and neighborhood resilience. Encourage donation of surplus produce with tax incentives.

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8. Food Is Medicine

Move Food Is Medicine from individual programs into sustainable health-system practice through sustainable funding, Medicaid and health plan partnerships, and expanded access to produce prescriptions, medically tailored meals, and medically tailored groceries. Expand Medically-Tailored Meal and Medically Tailored Grocery programs to meet the growing need of District residents experiencing life-challenging illnesses and nutrition insecurity. Commit to a multi-year investment in DC's Produce Rx program administered by DC Greens to ensure long-term impact and access for residents experiencing diet-related health challenges. Prioritize culturally relevant foods and community-rooted businesses and partners to strengthen the District's local food economy while improving health. Ensure that residents living with diet-related conditions and participating in Food Is Medicine initiatives have a meaningful role in program design, implementation, and evaluation.

9. Composting and Food Waste

Expand residential curbside composting to all DC households, including offering solutions for apartment and multifamily buildings. Expand implementation of zero waste requirements and associated funding for food businesses. Require District agencies that serve food to donate all edible food and compost their organics, and expand access to Share Tables as a community-driven program to reduce food waste and prevent hunger. Create a reasonable timeline for these expansions across agencies and curbside composting. Support the expansion of food recovery efforts, community composting, and neighborhood-scale composting infrastructure through sustained funding, technical assistance, and priority investments in communities facing the greatest food access and environmental health challenges, including Wards 7 and 8.

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10. Food Literacy

With an increasingly complicated food and health information environment, DC can provide residents with trustworthy, culturally relevant food and nutrition information. By using trusted institutions (schools, community gardens, health care facilities, etc.), provide health communication and nutrition education. This should also include the civic side of food: helping residents understand how the food system works, where public food dollars go, how policies are made, and how residents, including young people, can participate in changing them.

11. DC Food Bill of Rights

Commit to developing and adopting a DC Food Bill of Rights, in partnership with residents and community organizations, to establish guiding principles for food access, nutrition equity, cultural dignity, community ownership, and democratic participation in the District's food system.

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