

First Lady, Agriculture Secretary: Every Pennsylvanian Deserves Access to Fresh, Local Food

Harrisburg, PA – First Lady Frances Wolf and Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding will be joined by Congressman Dwight Evans and food industry leaders to discuss how Pennsylvania's \$10 million Fresh Food Financing Initiative aims to address hunger, food insecurity and food apartheid in the commonwealth while simultaneously increasing market opportunities for Pennsylvania's agriculture producers. The discussion will be [livestreamed on Facebook](#) at 2:00 PM.

"The Wolf administration continues to work to ensure that all Pennsylvanians have equal access to fresh, healthy food, because your zip code should not predetermine the quality of food on your dinner table," said First Lady Frances Wolf. "The Fresh Food Financing Initiative COVID-19 Relief Fund is one of the many tools we have to combat food insecurity, and it is an exciting step in our fight for food equity across the state."

In Pennsylvania, approximately 2.04 million Pennsylvanians experience chronic hunger and food insecurity every day during the COVID-19 pandemic. Food insecurity means not having access to reliable and nutritious meals. Since hunger and health are deeply connected, the effects of inadequate food are profound, including increased risks for chronic diseases, higher chances of hospitalization, poorer overall health and increased health care costs. Chronic hunger also affects cognitive function and our ability to learn and retain information.

[The Fresh Food Financing Initiative COVID-19 Relief Fund](#) — championed by Congressman Evans and funded through the CARES Act — is available to for-profit, nonprofit or cooperative entities impacted by COVID-19, including grocery stores, corner stores, convenience stores, neighborhood markets, bodegas, food hubs, mobile markets, farmers markets, on-farm markets, urban farms and food aggregation centers with a direct connection to direct-to-consumer retail outlets.

"Is food available? Is it safe, affordable, nutritious? This is food security. Food insecurity, a food apartheid, is what systemic racism has tragically created for many Pennsylvanians," said Secretary Redding. "Corner stores in inner cities have candy bars, not fresh produce. I'm pleased that we are able to work to address this apartheid through the Fresh Food Financing Initiative by prioritizing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities and incentivizing retailers to provide fresh, local food. The program is stimulating economies, increasing market opportunities for farmers and improving local health."

The goal of the FFFI COVID-19 Relief Fund is to provide grant support to food retailing businesses impacted by COVID-19 to ensure that amidst the pandemic, communities can maintain healthy food access. In recognition of the disproportionate impacts of both COVID-19 and food apartheid on communities made up of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and especially Black and African American communities, prioritization will be given to those businesses that are owned by and serve low-income BIPOC communities. Additional prioritization will be given to applicants with supplier diversity and increase business opportunities for Minority Business Enterprises, Women Business Enterprises, Service-Disabled Veteran Business Enterprises, Veteran Business Enterprises, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Business Enterprises; and Disability-Owned Business Enterprises.

"I appreciate the Wolf Administration's continued strong support for the Fresh Food Financing Initiative, including this opportunity to bring stakeholders together to discuss how we can sustain and build on the program's success," said Congressman Dwight Evans (D-PA).

The live, virtual panel is an opportunity to highlight the Fresh Food Financing Initiative, build on the work of Governor Wolf's Food Security Partnership, and discuss the interconnectedness of Pennsylvania's robust agriculture industry and its ability to break down walls of inequity in Pennsylvania.

For more information on food security in Pennsylvania including information about resources and actions taken by the Wolf Administration and guidelines for the [Fresh Food Financing Initiative COVID-19 Relief Fund](#), visit agriculture.pa.gov/foodsecurity.

For information as it relates to agriculture during COVID-19 mitigation in Pennsylvania visit agriculture.pa.gov/COVID.