

OPENING THE CUPBOARDS ON **HUNGER** IN NORTH CAROLINA



MomsRising.org

Dear NC Lawmaker,

There are few things as gut-wrenching for a mother than hearing that her child is hungry and being unable to help. North Carolina mom Jacklyn describes how she coped with this experience: “...one of my daughters told me she was hungry and I lay there pretending to be asleep so I didn’t have to tell her the last few hotdogs were all we had for dinner.”

As you know, hunger was a pressing issue across our state long before the COVID-19 public health crisis. Prior to 2020, one in five children in North Carolina was already struggling with hunger.¹ That ratio has dramatically increased as a result of the pandemic and its impact on our economy; now, one in every four North Carolina children is hungry.² Feeding America projects that food insecurity rates will increase in all 100 North Carolina counties this year, leaving many more of our families struggling to put food on the table.

During the fall of 2020, we reached out to our 47,000 North Carolina MomsRising members, who live in all 100 North Carolina counties, and asked them, “What has it been like to feed your family during this pandemic?” Many of them wrote about skipping meals or foregoing necessary medications so their children and spouses had enough to eat. Others, such as Emelinoa, shared the impact that federal nutrition programs have had on their families: “Since this pandemic started, honestly if it had not been for food stamps or SNAP as some call it, we would be struggling tremendously.”

We invite you to listen to the North Carolinians who have been most impacted by the epidemic of hunger, which has grown alongside the coronavirus pandemic. Their voices are clear and compelling in the stories shared in this storybook. Their words show us that the problem of food insecurity is systemic and entrenched, and that far too many people work hard and still struggle to feed their families. Many of the more than 1 million North Carolinians who have recently filed for unemployment benefits now find themselves needing food assistance for the first time. We applaud the swift action you have taken to mitigate the harm this crisis has had on the people in our state. Thank you for your 2020 appropriations of \$12 million for the North Carolina Feeding the Carolinas food banks, \$75 million for school nutrition programs (SNPs) for operations and innovative meals, \$12 million for SNPs to deliver meals with yellow buses, and \$3.9 million to eliminate the reduced-price lunch copay. These investments make a difference, but more needs to be done.

During this time of high unemployment and stress, we urge you to lift the many remaining barriers to food access faced by North Carolina families and prevent additional families from going hungry. We implore you to take immediate action to protect and expand proven programs such as SNAP, WIC, and school meals.

Families in our state need and are asking for your urgent attention to reducing hunger & food insecurity. Please read these stories from real moms in North Carolina and take action today to ensure that no one in our state has to go to bed hungry.

Sincerely,

Jessica Burroughs, *MomsRising Hunger & Food Insecurity Senior Campaign Director, North Carolina*

Beth Messersmith, *MomsRising Senior Director, North Carolina*

1] [Feeding America, What hunger looks like in North Carolina](#) 2] [Feeding America, The impact of coronavirus on food insecurity](#)

NORTH CAROLINA WAS THE 10TH HUNGRIEST STATE IN THE U.S. EVEN BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

WHO IS HUNGRY IN AMERICA?



1 IN 8 STRUGGLES WITH HUNGER



1 IN 6 CHILDREN STRUGGLES WITH HUNGER



NORTH CAROLINA IS THE...



IN N.C.

1 IN 7 PEOPLE STRUGGLES WITH HUNGER

IN 18 N.C. COUNTIES

1 IN 4

CHILDREN STRUGGLES WITH HUNGER

1 IN 5

CHILDREN STRUGGLES WITH HUNGER IN N.C.

WHAT ACTIONS CAN YOU TAKE?

1. Join the [movement](#) to end hunger in North Carolina!
2. Share your story. In the past six months, has there ever been a time when you had to sacrifice something to feed your family? In the past six months, have you or your family benefited from SNAP (food stamps), WIC, P-EBT, or free school breakfast or lunch? If so, your story is powerful! The stories from families who face these challenges can move lawmakers and change policies. When we share them with other moms, they feel less alone in their struggles. Share your experience by [clicking here](#).

WHAT DOES HUNGER LOOK LIKE IN NORTH CAROLINA?



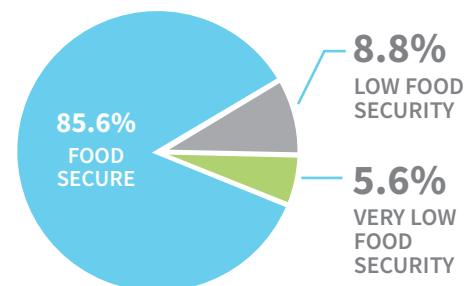
PEOPLE IN NEARLY 590,000 NC HOUSEHOLDS DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT EACH DAY



NC HAS THE 3RD HIGHEST RATE OF SENIOR HUNGER IN THE U.S.



14.4 PERCENT OF NC HOUSEHOLDS ARE FOOD INSECURE



Source: USDA's 2015 Report on Food Insecurity, (average 2013-15)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "FOOD INSECURE"?

A "food insecure" family does not have access to the money and resources necessary to provide enough healthy, nutritious food for all household members to lead an active life. These families have to make tough choices about the quality and quantity of food they are able to provide. Households with "very low food insecurity" often have to skip meals.

WHAT ARE TWO PROVEN POLICIES TO DECREASE HUNGER?



1. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- SNAP (food stamps) is the main federal food assistance program in the U.S.
- For most recipients, SNAP **supplements** a family's food budget. However, for the nearly 4 in 10 households that receive food assistance, SNAP is **the only way** for families to buy the food they need.



2. Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

- WIC provides nutritious foods, breastfeeding counseling, health care referrals, and nutrition education to low-income pregnant women, new mothers, and infants and young children in order to prevent nutrition-related health problems in pregnancy, infancy, and early childhood.
- Across the country, WIC provides support to about 1.7 million women, 1.9 million infants, and 3.8 million children in an average month.

WHAT DO SNAP & WIC LOOK LIKE IN NC?

1 IN 8 N.C. RESIDENTS
ARE BOOSTED BY SNAP
(13% of the population)

**SNAP SERVES FAMILIES
IN ALL 100 COUNTIES
INCLUDING 55,000 VETERANS**

- **More than 65% of SNAP participants are in families with children.** Almost 31% are in families with members who are elderly or have disabilities. More than 42% are in working families.
- **32.8% of children between the ages of 0-3 receive SNAP benefits**, which is higher than the national average of 29.8%.
- In NC, **SNAP helps 1 in 5 rural and small town households and 1 in 8 households in metro areas** afford healthy, nutritious meals.
- Roughly **9,700 businesses across the state participate in SNAP**, bringing in more than \$2.14 billion in benefits.
- In NC, the average **SNAP benefit per person per meal is \$1.43**, but the **average cost of a meal is \$2.88**. To make ends meet, SNAP recipients use a variety of methods to stretch benefits, including buying the cheapest food possible even if it has lower nutritional quality.
- According to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, **212,000 women, infants, and children participate in WIC** in NC.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY?

- All ages will experience improved health outcomes – starting with better birth outcomes.
- Studies have shown that reducing food insecurity leads to better academic outcomes for students from kindergarten to college.
- Families will not have to make tough choices between rent, medicine, or food.
- The economy will be stronger and more productive.
- One study showed that the health care expenses of food insecure households were 49% higher than the expenses of food secure households.
- Every \$5 in SNAP generates \$9 in local economic activity.

MomsRising.org | MamasConPoder.org

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Household Food Security in the United States in 2017; Feeding America, Hunger in North Carolina; Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap 2018: A Report on County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2016; NC Justice Center, N.C. ranks 10th in hunger in the nation; End Hunger Durham, Senior Hunger Fact Sheet; Urban Institute, How far do SNAP Benefits Fall Short of Covering the Cost of a Meal; Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, North Carolina Factsheet; Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, SNAP helps almost 1.4 million low-income veterans, including thousands in every state; Food Research & Action Center, North Carolina Facts; Mazon; USDA; WIC; Food Research & Action Center, Remember this December: Hunger is Solvable with WIC; Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, Association of food insecurity with children's behavioral, emotional, and academic outcomes: a systematic review; Food Research & Action Center, ResearchWire; CMAJ, Association between household food insecurity and annual healthcare costs; Food Research & Action Center, Analysis of 5-year American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample data

STORIES FROM MOMSRISING MEMBERS ACROSS NORTH CAROLINA

I have to say even if you are a family that receives food stamps that only stretches you for maybe three weeks at the max, with your children home and virtually learning from home. You tend to prepare more lunches and meals. And when the groceries get low it's hard financially to supply more food. It's just not easy like it used to be but you still sacrifice and keep a smile on your face for your children. My husband and I have skipped meals so the kids could eat. So it's not easy at all.

– **M., Cameron, NC**

Let me start by saying I'm not proud of not being able to have supper, lunch, or breakfast some days. But I don't mind going without food so my son, or my grandkids can get food. It's hard a lot of the time because my husband is the only one working, and when I can provide lunch that's our treat. But even then I wait til everyone in the house has their plate before I make my plate even if it's a few fries left. But then again I feel bad when they ask for seconds and there are none.

– **Michelle, Lowell, NC**

Since this pandemic started, honestly if it had not been for food stamps or SNAP as some call it, we would be struggling tremendously. Although the stamps help with food, I myself am on a lot of medication and I have had to do without getting them due to having to get necessities for our household like laundry detergent, dish washing soap, shampoo, conditioner, etc. There have been days that I have gone without eating just to make sure my 2 boys had food to eat. This pandemic has really put a strain on our family but I know others are struggling too.

– **Emelinoa, Roanoke Rapids, NC**

I guess it all started when I became sick the 1st of March. I lost my job plus insurance. My husband as a 24 year automotive technician was put on essential duty. His pay dropped to 1/3. He was diagnosed with C-diff, a horrible intestinal issue you can have. We couldn't afford the procedure thus we treated it with antibiotics and prayer. We've maintained all bills but the mortgage but they are working with us. We've cut all expenses. I

**2020 FOOD
INSECURITY
RATES ARE
PROJECTED
TO INCREASE IN
ALL 100
NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTIES**

Source: Feeding America, The Impact of the Coronavirus on Food Insecurity



had to begin going to a food bank. We are grateful but all the bread has been covered in mold, the few items of produce have been bad and they don't provide for a balanced diet.

I go 3-4 days without eating each week just to feed my husband - he has to eat. I've always been petite at 95 lbs but I'm down to 73lbs. I'm so depressed, so weak, I feel like I'm slowly dying. If there is help to be given we would forever be grateful.

– **Angela, NC**

It's so hard. Everything is so much more expensive and I have to go to several stores to find basics. I have severe food anxiety. I have fasted 2 meals a day and given up all but water to drink to save. There are no benefits in my senior home, I just worry about the next meal.

– **N., Kernersville, NC**

We've been hard hit. My 2 year old is very picky at times and with me being high risk due to health I can't order online so it's stressful going to the store and trying to get what I can to make nutritious meals that my family will actually enjoy, to at least have good family time around the dinner table

– **Annie, NC**



“I cry so much (for example one of my daughters told me she was hungry and I lay there pretending to be asleep so I didn’t have to tell her the last few hotdogs were all we had for dinner). I’m too tired to cry anymore. ”

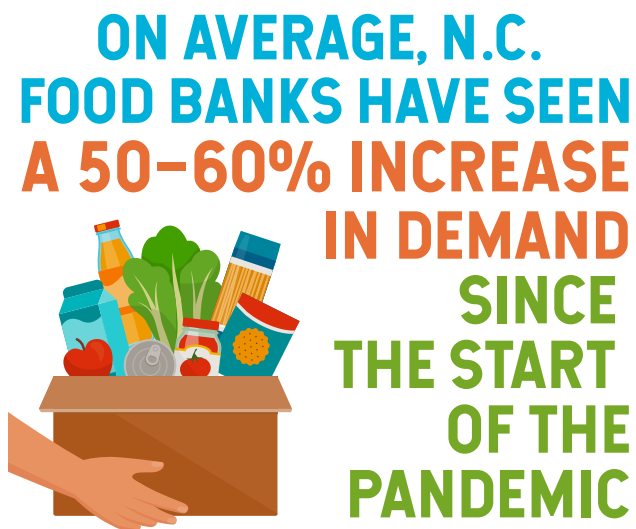
– Jacklyn, Jacksonville, NC

I am a mom of 6 very active, beautiful amazing children ages 17, 16, 15, 12, 11 and 9. Since the pandemic, my husband’s hours were cut and I’m not working as I’m home with our 6 children. We do receive EBT and we received P-EBT but to my surprise we ran out of food so fast. It broke my heart and I felt like the worst parent ever not knowing what I was going to feed my children for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I had to go without personal as well as hygiene products so we could buy food.

We’ve had to go without toilet paper and our dog has been without food so I borrowed some from our neighbors. We are living paycheck to paycheck and we have faced eviction and had the landlord threatening us with court when before the pandemic we lived in our home 12 years and never once were late on rent. I’m trying to homeschool my children at the same time I’m trying to stay sane.

I cry so much (for example one of my daughters told me she was hungry and I lay there pretending to be asleep so I didn’t have to tell her the last few hotdogs were all we had for dinner). I’m too tired to cry anymore.

– Jacklyn, Jacksonville, NC



Source: Feeding the Carolinas

THE FOOD INSECURITY RATE HAS SKYROCKED AMONG N.C. CHILDREN



1 IN 4 CHILDREN STRUGGLES WITH HUNGER

Source: Feeding America, The Impact of the Coronavirus on Food Insecurity



"I am willing to discuss and be involved in this because struggling everyday isn't how we should be living. There needs to be a solution to this."

– **Mary Beth, Canton, NC**

I am a single grandmother that is raising grandkids. I am 51 and have an 11 year old girl and a 6 year old boy. I am on disability, social security, food stamps, Medicaid and Medicare. I have been raising them for 5 years and have been on assistance for over 10 years. My kids were also involved in Head Start. I am willing to discuss and be involved in this because struggling everyday isn't how we should be living. There needs to be a solution to this.

– **Mary Beth, Canton, NC**

I've been trying. My kids are grown but many times have asked if I have anything to eat. I go to pantries and make them care bags to take home.

– **Jenny, NC**

My family and I have been in a hotel room during this pandemic. We have a stove and a refrigerator but we have struggled to buy food for our family of 7, which includes my disabled son, my daughter who has diabetes, four grandchildren (three which are teenage boys and my grandgirl) and myself.

My daughter works with the school, so she is out of work. I work 12 hours a day. We pay a weekly rent so we have had to depend on the free lunches that the school provided and going to different churches to get food. We appreciate the help that we have received from the different churches.

– **S., Raleigh, NC**

With only \$350 of EBT funds it's been hard to buy food and keep the family afloat with no extra EBT for our family and the cost of food going up or the grocery store where you go doesn't have what you normally buy and you have to pay more for other brands. There's no extra help for the elderly, and a lot of people have been left without extra help.

– **S., Hays, NC**

**IN 2020, NORTH CAROLINA
WAS THE 10TH
MOST FOOD
INSECURE
STATE IN THE U.S.**



Source: Feeding America, The Impact of the Coronavirus on Food Insecurity

It has been hard. Yes I am still working but not enough hours to pay my bills but just enough where I cannot get unemployment.

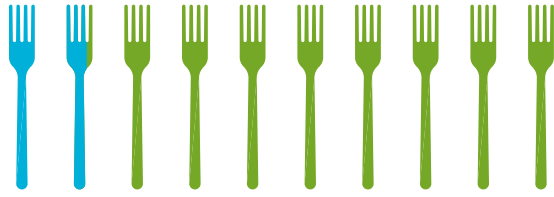
I have 3 teenagers and can barely put food on the table. I myself go some nights without eating just to make sure my kids have plenty.

– **C., Tarboro, NC**

I have to buy low carb, low cholesterol, and low sodium diet foods for myself but I do without many foods because I buy for my kids and granddaughter and grandson too. It's hard to feed all of us on my social security income.

– **Lucy, NC**

17.6% OF N.C. RESIDENTS ARE FOOD INSECURE



THIS IS 1.8 MILLION PEOPLE

Source: Feeding America, The Impact of the Coronavirus on Food Insecurity

When farmer's markets were still closed it was tough. We did start a garden like we always do but we were more careful this year and paid more attention. Thankfully, we became vegetarians in January and that has helped tremendously with the food bill but it still can get expensive. We have not used any services as of yet since my husband's manufacturing job held steady but I have not returned to my normal rate of work. The feeling is we are really just one step, one crisis, one accident away from extreme poverty.

– **Jeanne, Maiden, NC**

It's horrible to try and feed everyone in the house. I have to do without my heart medication just to be able to put food on the table.

– **Misty, Hickory, NC**

I have had to go without paying my cell phone bill and cable. It's hard being around children with no phone. I got laid off, and am a single mom of three. Some days we don't have enough to eat.

– **Magali, NC**

Since the pandemic came around and the lockdown has been going on, everything food related has gone up. I've been having a lot of trouble keeping balanced meals on my table. I have specific dietary needs for myself- less processed foods, lower sodium and carbs, low fats, healthy low fat proteins. I also feed my children and grandchildren, and their needs are different than mine.

It's almost devastating trying to get everything each person needs. Many times, I have to go without some of the items that I need because it could mean the difference between making it for the whole month or

not. I have had to do without medications to be able to buy food. Sometimes, I don't use the medication as often as required to make it last longer to have more money for food. I've stretched getting my medications and medical supplies over weeks and had to borrow from friends to get them. I don't ask, sometimes they get them for me anyway. Being disabled and living on a fixed income is difficult. It would be really nice to have everything balance out and make it without worries.

– **L., Gastonia, NC**

It's been really hard for my household. We have no car to get around so we have to go whenever we can catch a ride with someone and most of the time the store doesn't have a lot to choose from or it's too expensive.

Other times when we have no way to get to the store we have to walk to the closest Dollar Store and waste the food stamps in the Dollar Store and that type of food really doesn't last long at all! So it's been really hard for us with a growing 13 year old son home all the time.

– **Tracey, NC**

"It's horrible to try and feed everyone in the house. I have to do without my heart medication just to be able to put food on the table."

– **Misty, Hickory, NC**



**1.3 MILLION
PEOPLE FILED FOR
UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS
IN N.C. BETWEEN MID-MARCH
AND DECEMBER 30, 2020**

**9,050 JOBLESS CLAIMS
WERE FILED IN N.C. ON
DECEMBER 30TH ALONE**

Source: NC Division of Employment Security

"First of all every day is a struggle. I'm raising my grandson... I have used some of my bill money to put more food on the table so now I have to figure out how to pay some of my bills."

- P., North Wilkesboro, NC

The last of the month is the hardest and this month the freezer got unplugged by accident and we didn't know it for 2 days so we're eating eggs.

- T., Hiddenite, NC

I've been hit very hard and yes I'm sacrificing a lot. I'm not eligible for help for food. I'm handicapped so I have sacrificed medicine and feeding supplies and clothing for my youngest daughter and older daughter. My husband lost his job and pounds the streets for jobs that pay decently and will allow him to take care of me when needed. I am homeschooling my daughter. Just need a break cause the depression is hitting hard at the house for all of us.

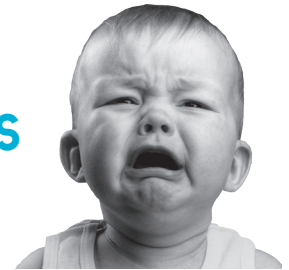
- Allison, Selma, NC

It has truly been a struggle for us to buy groceries during the pandemic. We are a fixed income family with two disability incomes, which only is enough to cover bills and household items, and only \$192/month in food stamps. Usually the last 2 weeks of the month we are asking our family to try and help us get some groceries. Sometimes they are able to help but more often aren't able to help. It is difficult to maintain food for the 4 of us because the income is low and it all goes to bills. I barely can even buy enough groceries to get us through the first 2 weeks of the month.

- M., Newton, NC

In surveys conducted Nov. 11 through Dec. 7, 2020,

1 IN 5 NORTH CAROLINA ADULTS
LIVING WITH CHILDREN
SAID THE CHILDREN IN THEIR HOUSEHOLDS
WEREN'T EATING ENOUGH
BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T
AFFORD ENOUGH
FOOD OVER THE
PAST SEVEN DAYS



Source: Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, Tracking the COVID-19 Recession's Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships

First of all every day is a struggle. I'm raising my grandson. I just got guardianship of him and it's been hard cuz the boy likes to eat but I would sacrifice everything I have just to take care of him. We depend on EBT and then some but because of the pandemic it got worse because first of all I'm not supposed to go out and I have health issues that make it harder on me. I draw disability and it isn't much, his mom's not paying child support so this has put us in a bind but the Lord helps us get through it.

It's been hard because I don't like asking for help but sometimes you have to. I have used some of my bill money to put more food on the table so now I have to figure out how to pay some of my bills.

- P., North Wilkesboro, NC

I'm a grandmother of ten, I have grown children. I have had to raise two of my grandchildren since right before this all started. The lack of resources for Americans is unreal. It breaks my heart to see people going through all of this, and for myself it has been a big challenge. I do the best I can to raise my children through all of this...

- Melissa, Clarkton, NC

**FOOD INSECURITY
IN NORTH CAROLINA**

**FEBRUARY
2020**

2X HIGHER

**APRIL-MAY
2020**

Source: Institute for Policy Research Rapid Research Report (2020), How much has food insecurity risen? Evidence from the Census Household Pulse Survey



There are times when we have to stretch meals to make them last and times when we don't have 3 meals a day. The school used to provide breakfast and lunch, but since the quarantine they are doing school online, so I am having to provide all the meals.

I was selling stuff at the local flea market, but quit a couple of months after the pandemic. I am selling stuff from home, but the income is not steady so the food budget is about half of what it used to be.

- Katherine, Eden, NC

My son and I are disabled. We've been running from his father who hurt him. He was put in my protective custody, we just moved out of a home we rented that had been flooded, but our light bill is too much.

My son has to have meds that are not covered. Food is hard to afford. I will skip meals and drink fluids most of the time.

- Dusty, NC

It's been hard. My pay has been cut. My husband's has too. (He sells beer to bars and restaurants for an NC brewery. You can imagine how that's going!). I have been sick and was hospitalized for a few days.

The medical bills from doctors trying to identify my illness and take care of me are insanely high and continue to come in. My credit is being ruined right now. I'm very stressed. And yet I know I have it better than most.

- C., Wake Forest, NC

**For more information or stories, please contact
Jessica Burroughs at jessica@momsrising.org**

MomsRising.org is an online and on-the-ground grassroots organization of more than a million people who are working to achieve economic security for all families in the United States.

MomsRising is working for paid family leave, flexible work options, affordable childcare, and for an end to the wage and hiring discrimination which penalizes so many others. MomsRising also advocates for better childhood nutrition, health care for all, toxic-free environments, and breastfeeding rights so that all children can have a healthy start.

Established in 2006, MomsRising and its members are organizing and speaking out to improve public policy and to change the national dialogue on issues that are critically important to America's families. In 2013, Forbes.com named MomsRising's web site as one of the Top 100 Websites For Women for the fourth year in a row and Working Mother magazine included MomsRising on its "Best of the Net" list.