

Minnesota Partners to End Hunger

State Legislative Agenda 2021



Expand Access to SNAP for Low-Income Minnesotans

Many Minnesotans are just above the income level to qualify for SNAP but are still experiencing food insecurity. Using Broad Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) we have the ability to increase the gross income threshold on SNAP for 165% to 200% of federal poverty. By raising it, we can help many people who are struggling to put food on the table to get the resources they need to feed their families.

Ask: Support HF 611 & SF 759 to raise the gross income level on SNAP to 200% of federal poverty

Lead organizations: Hunger Solutions Minnesota

Invest in Healthy Hunger-Free Schools

The purpose of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Schools program is to ensure all students are supported in achieving their academic potential; that all students have access to nutritious options while they are developing life-long eating habits; and that there is no stigma associated with receiving free school meals.

Ask: Support HF 1729 and invest the state and federal resources necessary to ensure all Minnesota children have access to breakfast and lunch at no cost to them.

Lead organization: Hunger Solutions Minnesota

Committee: Education Finance

End School Lunch Shaming

Minnesota became a leader in addressing the issue of school lunch shaming when it passed legislation to ensure reminders about lunch payments do not stigmatize or demean students who participate in the free school meals program. Yet some students who are unable to pay are still demeaned or denied access to a nutritious lunch. We support closing the loophole in state law that allows this to happen.

Ask: Support HF 149 & SF 777 to take a strong stand against lunch shaming.

Lead organization: Legal Aid & Hunger Solutions Minnesota

Committee: Education

Invest in Expanding Food Shelf Capacity in MN

A coalition of hunger relief organizations is seeking a one-time investment of \$7,385,000 in fiscal year 2022 to support expansion of hunger relief services in Minnesota. Keystone Community Services, Southern Anoka Community Assistance, 360 Communities, Community Pathways of Steele County and Wright County Community Action need support to expand their capacity to serve more people with more food and resources.

Ask: Support HF 1753 and fund \$7,385,000 million for infrastructure support for five hunger relief organizations.

Lead organization: Keystone Community Services

Improve College Student Access of Basic Needs Support

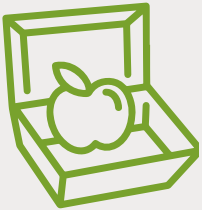
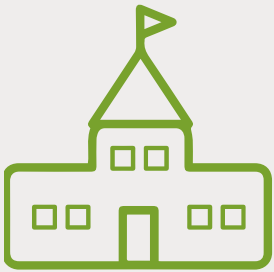
40% of Minnesota college students report struggling with food insecurity while trying to pursue their education. Combined with other basic needs insecurities and the pandemic, many college students are in crisis. This bill creates resource hubs for students to access local, state and federal basic needs support and requires colleges to provide students with information about available basic needs support based on their FAFSA information when they enroll.

Ask: Support SF 1631 and provide \$500,000 to create basic needs hubs and financial aid basic needs resource

triggers at community and technical colleges.

Lead organization: LeadMN - College Students Connecting for Change

Committee: Higher Education



About Partners to End Hunger

Minnesota Partners to End Hunger is a statewide network of service providers and advocates working to end hunger in Minnesota by motivating decision-makers to take supportive action on state and national hunger policy issues.

Contact: Colleen Moriarty, Executive Director, Hunger Solutions Minnesota - Chair, cmoriarty@hungersolutions.org, 651-789-9841

Expanding Access to SNAP for More Low-Income Minnesotans

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest federal nutrition assistance program and the first line of defense against hunger. SNAP supplements low-income family food budgets so they can purchase food that meets their needs. For every meal provided by food banks and food shelves, SNAP provides 9, making it by far the most efficient solution.

An unprecedented 20% of Minnesotans are reporting food insecurity. In order fully leverage SNAP to address high levels of food insecurity due to COVID-19, Hunger Solutions Minnesota worked with partners across the state on a project to explore ways to improve SNAP in Minnesota by hearing directly from SNAP participants and individuals experiencing food insecurity through surveys and listening sessions.

1 in 3 respondents NOT on SNAP report being food insecure. Many reporting being just above the current income limit, or having their income and eligibility for SNAP fluctuate. **During a time of need it's critical we fully leverage SNAP to make sure low income Minnesotans have enough food on the table to feed their families.**



The Solution

Raising the SNAP Gross Income Threshold in Minnesota

Broad Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) allows states to increase the SNAP income eligibility. In Minnesota we have the ability to increase the gross income threshold on SNAP from 165% to 200% of federal poverty. By doing this we can help out many who are struggling to put food on the table to get the resources they need to feed their families.

“I make too much to receive SNAP, and barely enough to survive for my kid and I.”

- SNAP Project Participant

\$1

in SNAP generates

\$1.70

in economic activity

“I’ve been unemployed since the Pandemic started, which brought us from 2 incomes to 1. Free food giveaways and school food help so much because they are about the only thing we qualify for, but we really need to cut expenses somewhere”

- SNAP Project Participant

Raising the gross income threshold for SNAP would:

- Strengthen food security and economic stability among low-income working households
- Provide SNAP benefits to low-income Minnesotans with high expenses like housing and childcare
- Bring more federal funding into Minnesota
- Boost the local economy



Healthy, Hunger-Free Schools Minnesota

BACKGROUND

Hunger in Minnesota is unacceptably high.

1 in 6 kids in Minnesota is food insecure.

Adequate nutrition is a precursor to success in schools.

Students who participate in school meals have improved attendance, and academic achievement as well as decreased tardiness. Like busing, internet access and proper hydration, food is required for learning.

MN is leaving millions of federal dollars on the table.

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a federal program that allows high poverty schools to offer breakfast and lunch at no charge to ALL students. Currently, only half of Minnesota schools eligible for CEP are participating.



1 in 6
kids in Minnesota
is food insecure

HEALTHY, HUNGER-FREE SCHOOLS

The purpose of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Schools Program is to ensure all students are supported in achieving their academic potential; that all students have access to nutritious options while they are developing life-long eating habits; and that there is no stigma associated with receiving free school meals. Core components of the bill include:

- Requires all schools participating in the National School Lunch Program to provide breakfast and lunch to all children at no cost to them.
- Maximizes federal reimbursements including Free and Reduced-Price Lunch and the Community Eligibility Provision.
- Requires eligible schools to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision and provides additional state resources to fully fund school meals for the children not covered by this provision.

IMPACT

Increase Future Potential. Ensuring kids get healthy food is a critical step on the path out of poverty. This is good for Minnesota. When you have stronger, smarter, healthier kids, you have a stronger, smarter, healthier, more economically competitive state.

Address Health Equity. Minnesota ranks among the worst in the nation when it comes to health equity, and ensuring all students have access to healthy food at school is one of the most impactful tools available to address food as a social determinant of health.

Reduce Stigma and End Lunch Shaming. Universal meals level the playing field for all students. Kids will no longer feel singled out for eating a school meal.

Cover All Kids. 1 in 4 kids in Minnesota who experience food insecurity are in households that earn too much to qualify for free or reduced school meals.

Maximize Federal Resources. 158 schools in Minnesota are currently eligible for CEP (Community Eligibility Provision) but are not participating. Ensuring all eligible schools are able to participate would bring millions in additional support to cover school meals for all kids in high poverty schools.

Lead partners include Allina, American Diabetes Association, Appetite for Change, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Children's Minnesota, Ed Allies, Education Minnesota, Every Meal, Food Research and Action Center, General Mills, Hunger Solutions Minnesota, MAZON, Minnesota Legal Aid, Minnesota School Social Workers Association, Second Harvest Heartland, The Food Group and YouthPrise.

For more information contact Leah Gardner, lgardner@hungersolutions.org, 651-789-9850

Hunger Solutions and Legal Services Advocacy Project have worked in partnership to address lunch shaming since 2011. In 2014, Minnesota passed some of the first legislation in the country addressing the problem of school lunch shaming. Despite the anti-shaming language in the law, we have continued to learn of school districts that employ practices that are demeaning and embarrassing to students including:

- Having meals dumped
- Being given a substitute meal such as a cheese sandwich
- Being removed from the cafeteria to eat elsewhere such as the principal's office
- Being reminded in publicly identifiable ways such as stamps or notes in the lunch line

A brief history of lunch shame



2014

Legislation passed ending the practice of lunch shaming in Minnesota schools.



2019

Attorney General Keith Ellison issues a legal opinion in 2019 that students should not be denied the right to participate in graduation due to an unpaid meal balance.



2019

Legislation is re-introduced to further strengthen protections against lunch shaming.

2017

Reports surface of Stewartville Public Schools dumping the hot lunch of students with a meal debt and replacing it with a cold sandwich.



2019

An incident of lunch dumping in the Richfield Public Schools calls attention to the issue of lunch shaming.



1 in 4 kids

who are food insecure don't qualify for free/reduced school meals.



What we can do about it

Pass the bill (HF 149/SF 777) to:

- Keep payment reminders between adults
- Ensure that all children receive a meal regardless of their balance
- Ensure that once a child receives a meal, it may not be subsequently removed
- Prohibit a school meal debt resulting in limitations on school activities



OUR STATEWIDE FOOD INSECURITY CRISIS REQUIRES ACTION NOW!

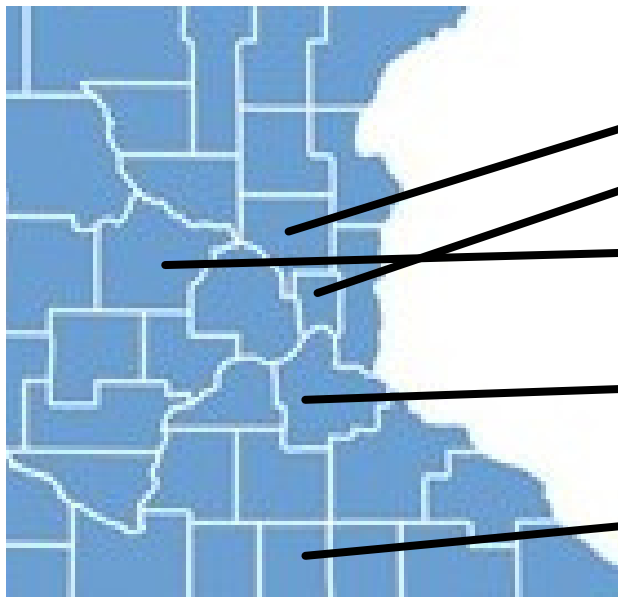


NEEDS HAVE INCREASED RAPIDLY

- Minnesotans made 3,831,293 visits to food shelves in 2020, a record high during an unprecedented year, and 434,587 more visits than the record high set in 2019
- Seniors visiting food shelves in 2021 increased by 31%
- If Minnesota food shelves were open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, more than seven people would visit a food shelf every minute

citation: <https://www.hungersolutions.org/data-posts/minnesota-food-shelf-visits-up-7-in-2020-a-new-record-high/>

FOOD SHELVES NEED SUPPORT TO CONTINUE SERVING MINNESOTA RESIDENTS



Total Projects Request:

\$7,385,000 in fiscal year 2022 appropriated from the general fund to the commissioner of employment and economic development for grants to Minnesota food relief organizations for infrastructure needs. **This is a onetime appropriation request.**

THE FOOD SHELF COALITION



\$3,000,000 for Keystone Community Services for the construction, renovation, and equipment of a new community food site in Ramsey County toward their \$6.5 million project. **Keystone has a million-dollar challenge grant contingent on receiving \$3 million in state funding. Keystone is the largest food shelf provider in the east metro.** This 20,000 Sq. Ft. new facility will support the increasing number of people turning to Keystone for food and crisis support. In 2020 Keystone provided 20,000 low-income households with food and crisis supports, equivalent to 180,000 free bags of groceries. **The new site will increase our impact by 50%.** The food site will also help expand our Foodmobile program that makes 30+ stops in high demand areas.



\$1,500,000 for Southern Anoka Community Assistance (SACA) for acquisition, construction, renovation, and equipment of a new food shelf toward their \$3 million project. **This new site will add 5 livable wage jobs,** and the new 11,500 Sq. Ft. site will double SACA's current size to meet 35% increase in community demand for food shelf and food delivery services. **In 2020, the number of senior food delivery and food shelf visits was approximately 16,000 a 35% increase over 2019.**



\$1,500,000 for 360 Communities for acquisition, construction, and equipment of a new resource center and food shelf in Dakota County of their \$3 million project. 360 Communities operates two resource centers and five food shelves in southern Dakota County under a Supershelf model. **In 2020, served 2,488 unduplicated individuals, distributing 238,370 pounds of food. This new facility will increase days of operation, increasing our impact by 25%.** During 2020, 360 Communities distributed 238,370 pounds of food.



\$1,000,000 for Community Pathways of Steele County for acquisition, construction, renovation, and equipment to renovate and expand current food shelf location of their \$2.6 million project. **This expansion would double our size from 6,000 Sq. Ft. to 12,000 and increase our impact by 50%. The purpose of this building is for a Marketplace - food for families who struggle with food insecurity.** Community Pathways is proud to be a SuperShelf, knowing that healthier citizens can be more productive and feel better about themselves.



\$385,000 for Wright County Community Action to expand volume of food rescue distribution, including but not limited to staffing, transportation, supply costs, administrative support, training, and volunteer training costs. New preservation opportunities include refrigerated, frozen, canned, or dehydrated products, so that preserved food will be distributed also. **In 2020 over 150,000 lbs. of fresh produce were distributed. WCCA has the distribution capacity to supply 60% more fresh vegetables and fruit annually directly from the farm to an expanded network of local food shelves and other food security partners in the form of fresh farm produce ready to distribute or to preserve for distribution during winter months.**

This request has the support of:

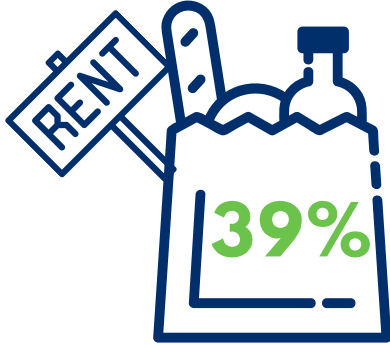


POLICY SNAPSHOT:

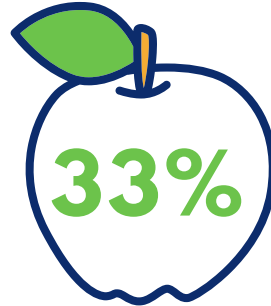
STUDENT SUCCESS BASIC NEEDS BARRIER REDUCTION, SF1631

HUNGER IMPACTS STUDENT SUCCESS

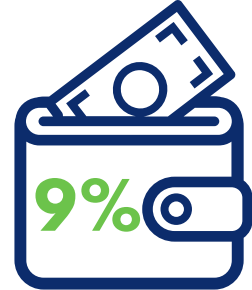
Food insecurity, housing insecurity and other basic needs insecurity impacts thousands of Minnesota community and technical college students ability to be successful in college.



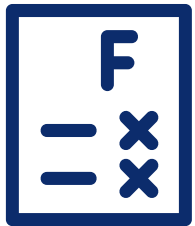
Are Concerned About
Being Able to Afford Food
or Housing in the Next 30
Days¹



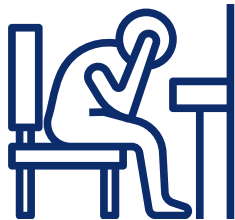
Of Students Cut the Size or
Skipped Meals Because There
Was Not Enough Money For
Food²



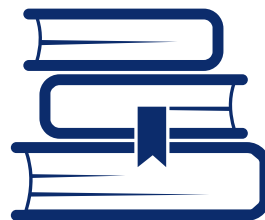
Of Students Did Not Eat
For a Whole Day Because
They Didn't Have Enough
Money For Food²



25%
Of Students
Dropped Courses
Due To Hunger³



53%
Of Food Insecure
Students Missed
Classes³



55%
Of Food Insecure
Students Did Not
Purchase A Textbook³



+2 MILLION
College Students Were
Eligible For SNAP in
2016, But Did Not
Utilize The Program⁴

POLICY PROPOSAL

Student Success Basic Needs Barrier Reduction

Would require each Minnesota State to implement the following basic needs reduction strategies:

- Create a basic needs resource hub that is available at every community and technical college to provide students information on campus, local, state, and federal programs and support to reduce basic needs insecurity.
- Requires each college to have a designated employee to connect students to basic needs support.
- Would create an automatic basic needs resource referral trigger that would provide students with information on available basic needs based on their financial aid information when they enroll in college.
- Includes an appropriation to help colleges implement these requirements and other strategies that reduce basic. needs insecurity.

Sources

1. LeadMN Survey of 8220 students 11/24/2020 - 12/08/2020

2. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities #RealCollege Survey Report, 2019

3. Dubick, J., Matthews, B., & Cady, C. (2016, October). Hunger on Campus: The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students

4. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/696254.pdf> Better Information Could Help Eligible College Students Access Federal Food Assistance Benefits, 2019

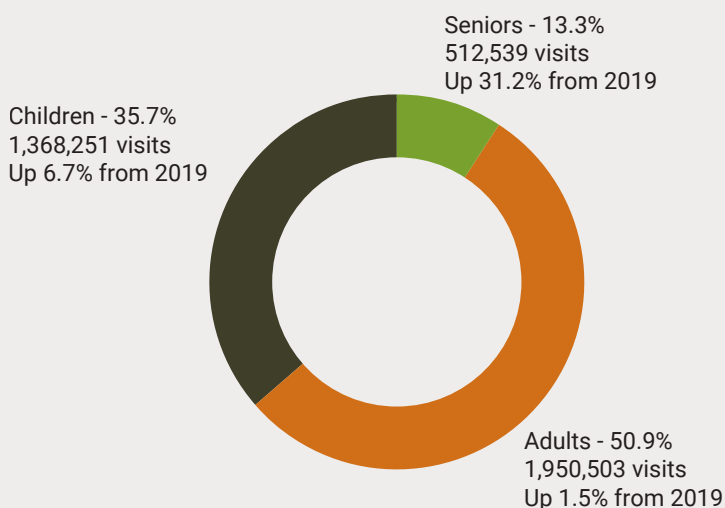
2020 marked the 10th consecutive year with over 3 million visits, a trend that began post recession. The emergency food system pivoted to new service models to address the challenges of the year, and in return 3,831,293 adults, seniors and children made visits to food shelves -- a new record high.

Last year, Minnesotans made
3,831,293 visits
to food shelves.

2020 marks the 10th consecutive year
with over 3 million food shelf visits.

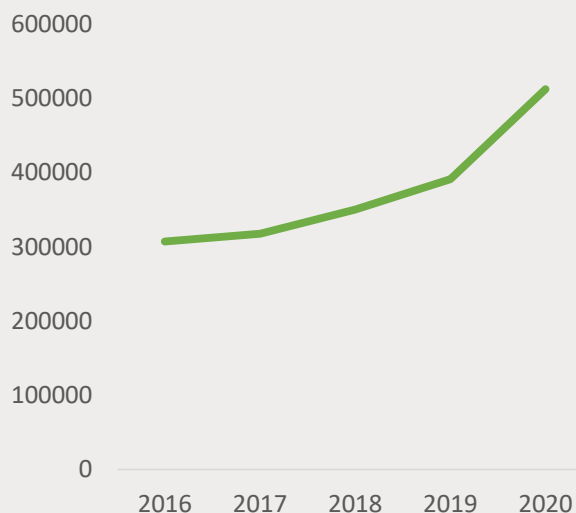


Food Shelf Visits by Age, 2020



Food Shelf Visits by Seniors, 2016-2020

Seniors (adults 65 years and older) are the fastest growing group of food shelf users. From 2019 to 2020, the number of food shelf visits by seniors rose 31.2%.

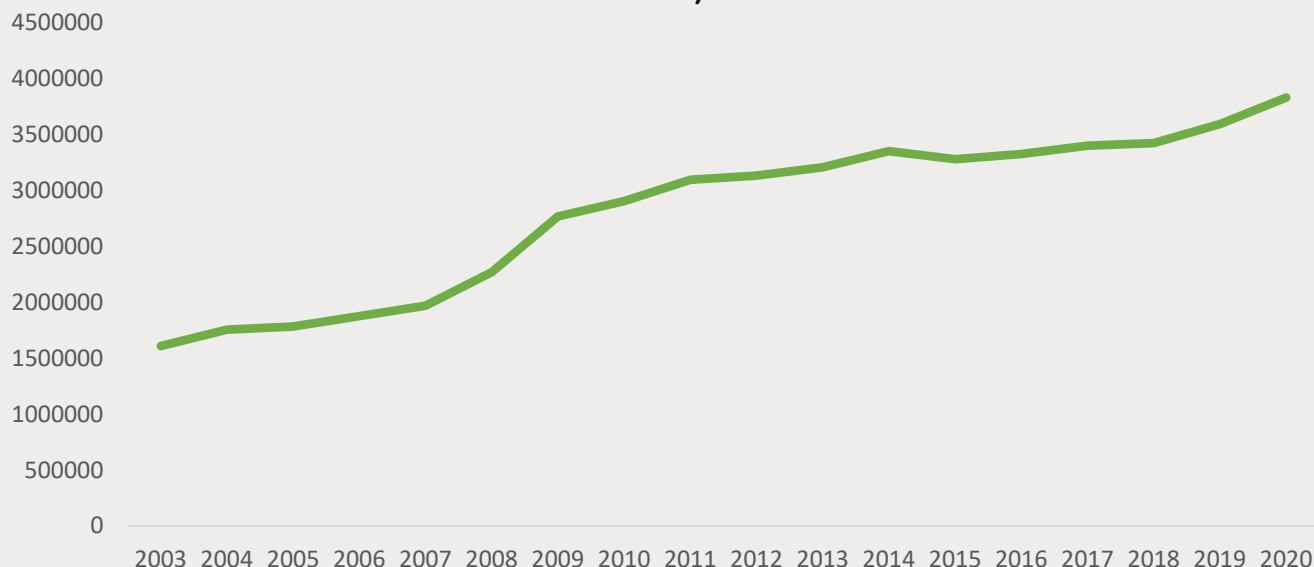


Source: Food shelf reports to MN DHS. Analysis by Hunger Solutions.

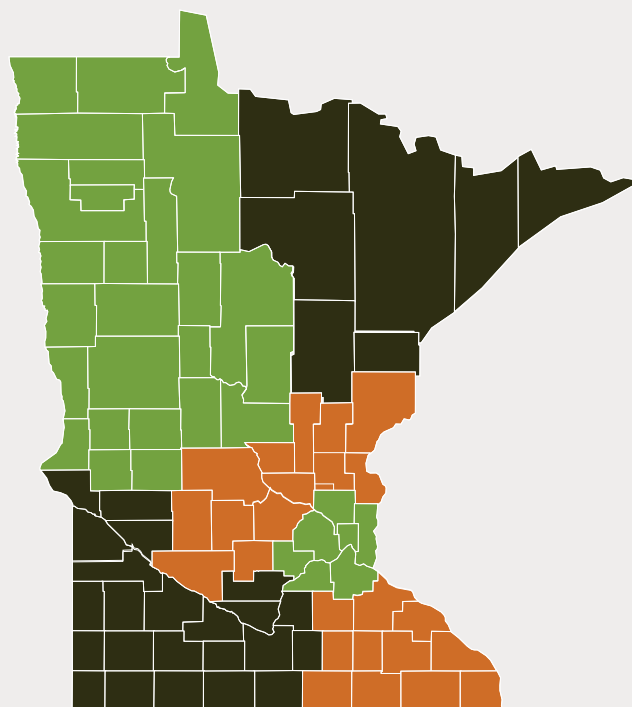
A record high number of visits

Three million visits per year has long been a “new normal” for Minnesota’s food shelves, however 2020 was nothing but “normal”. Food shelves around the state found new ways to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic with new service models, increased hours of operation and delivery and transportation resources. The increased access through service changes, and the economic impact of the pandemic brought record number of visits to the food shelves in Minnesota.

Food shelf visits, 2003-2020



Source: Food shelf reports to MN DHS. Analysis by Hunger Solutions Minnesota.



Food shelf visits by region, 2020

	% total visits 2019	% of population
Central	9.0%	13.0%
Metro	65.1%	55.0%
NE	4.6%	6.0%
NW	7.4%	10.0%
SE	7.3%	9.0%
SW	7.1%	7.0%

The number of food shelf visits in each region of the state roughly follow the percentage of the population that lives there. It doesn't matter if you live in a rural area, a small town, or urban area - hunger is distributed evenly throughout the state.

Sources: Food shelf reports to MN DHS. Analysis by Hunger Solutions Latest annual estimates of Minnesota and its 87 counties' population and households, 2019. (Excel file, released August 2020.)