



Press release for Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. For immediate release.

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## DESPITE PROGRESS, ARKANSAS STILL A LEADER IN FOOD INSECURITY

**LITTLE ROCK, AR (May 2, 2018 )**– Feeding America, a nationwide network of 200 food banks leading the effort to end hunger in America, released its annual [Map the Meal Gap](#) report today. The 2018 report (based on 2016 data) focuses on county and congressional district food insecurity and county level food cost in the United States.

Despite slight but steady progress in reducing food insecurity since the 2015 report, Arkansas remains second highest in the nation at 17.2 percent of households whose members— at times— experience lack of access to enough food for an active, healthy life. More than 515,000 Arkansans struggle to get enough to eat. Of that total, 165,000 are children. The report ranks the Natural State third in childhood food insecurity behind New Mexico and Mississippi. One in four Arkansas children, or 23.2 percent, are at risk of hunger.

Food insecurity by Congressional district is similarly disconcerting:

District	Food Insecure People	Percentage
1	142,640	19.7%
2	137,330	18.1%
3	103,830	13.1%
4	131,470	18.5%

The report also includes county-by-county breakouts of [household](#) and [child](#) food insecurity in each state. This provides a comprehensive statewide assessment that local and state leaders can use in developing goals and strategies to reduce hunger.

“At a time when Congress is working on the 2018 Farm Bill, we hope they will take to heart this alarming profile of hunger in America,” said Kathy Webb, Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance executive director. “The reported \$21 billion food budget shortfall makes the proposed cuts to federal nutrition programs such as SNAP and afterschool programs all the more dangerous. We hope our members of Congress will join with the Alliance and Arkansas’s six Feeding America food banks to formulate policy that will move Arkansas out of the top ranks of food insecurity. ”

Other key national findings:

- USDA estimates that 41 million people (or 1 in 8 Americans), including nearly 13 million children are food insecure.

- Rural counties account for 63% of all U.S. counties but account for 79% with the highest rates of food insecurity.
- Of U.S. counties with the highest rates of food insecurity, 89% are in the South.
- The estimated rate of child food insecurity is higher than the rate of overall food insecurity.
- The national food budget shortfall, or total annualized need among everyone estimated to be food insecure, stands at \$21 billion as of 2016.
- Counties with the highest rates of food insecurity also have a higher prevalence of diabetes, obesity and persons with some form of disability.
- Counties with the highest rates of food insecurity also tend to have higher uninsured rates.

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#### **About Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance**

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, lead partner in Arkansas for the No Kid Hungry campaign, is a non-profit collaborative network of more than 520 hunger relief and advocacy organizations across Arkansas. Our founding members include the Arkansas Foodbank in Little Rock, the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas in Jonesboro, Harvest Regional Food Bank in Texarkana, Food Bank of North Central Arkansas in Norfork, Northwest Arkansas Food Bank in Bethel Heights and River Valley Regional Food Bank in Fort Smith. The Alliance is dedicated to reducing hunger through direct relief, education and advocacy. We invite you to visit [www.ARhungeralliance.org](http://www.ARhungeralliance.org) for details on hunger relief programs, donor and volunteer opportunities.

#### **About Map the Meal Gap**

Map the Meal Gap estimates the number of people, including children, that are food insecure in every county and congressional district in the country. To accurately estimate the number of people who may be food insecure, Feeding America uses publicly available state and local data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and food price data and analysis is provided by Nielsen, a global provider of information