

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 14, 2022

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Tribal communities in the United States face high levels of levels of hunger and food insecurity. One study that examined USDA data from 2000 to 2010 found that food insecurity among American Indians and Alaska Natives averaged 25 percent—twice as high as the white population—while a 2019 study found that among tribes in northern California and southern Oregon, 92 percent of households suffered from food insecurity.¹ Challenges families face accessing nutritious food in these areas can include long distances to grocery stores and high prices for groceries, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues.

As a result, families in tribal areas may be especially reliant upon federal nutrition programs administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), such as the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), and the National School Lunch Program. For example, FDPIR provides food to income-eligible households living on Indian reservations to help ensure they have access to a nutritionally balanced diet, while the School Lunch Program provides free or subsidized meals to school-aged children. However, families in tribal areas may be unaware of these programs or not know how to apply, and it is unclear how USDA has supported education efforts to increase family participation. Further, certain programs—including the School Lunch Program—are directly administered by states rather than tribes, limiting tribes' ability to meet their own unique needs.

I request that you answer the following questions:

- What food security challenges exist in tribal areas?
- What federal nutrition programs are available in tribal areas and to what extent do these programs meet the unique needs of tribal communities?
- To what extent has USDA taken steps to increase participation in federal nutrition programs and address food security challenges in tribes?

¹ See <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5422031/pdf/nihms827391.pdf>, and [Restoring access to Native foods can reduce food insecurity | UC Berkeley Rausser College of Natural Resources](#).

- What opportunities, if any, exist to promote tribal administration of USDA nutrition programs?

Please contact Naomi Miguel (Naomi.Miguel@mail.house.gov) and Kim Corbin (Kim.Corbin@mail.house.gov) if you have any questions about this request.

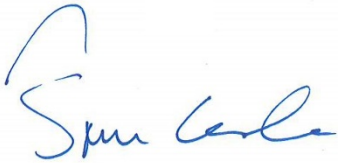
Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources



James P. McGovern
Chair
House Committee on Rules



Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Committee on Rules