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SAN DIEGO HUNGER COALITION'S REPORT REVEALS ALARMING STATISTICS ON NUTRITION INSECURITY IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

San Diego, CA — The 5th Annual State of Hunger luncheon, held on November 16, 2023, by San Diego Hunger Coalition (SDHC) unveiled staggering statistics shedding light on the prevalent concern of nutrition insecurity in San Diego. The Annual State of Hunger Address was presented by San Diego Hunger Coalition and partner organizations including San Diego Food Bank, Nourish CA, and Sweetwater Union High School District, and it highlighted the dire circumstances faced by a significant portion of the county's population.

Key findings from San Diego Hunger Coalition indicate that nearly 1 in 4 San Diegans were grappling with nutrition insecurity as of June 2023, representing approximately 790,000 individuals. Among these numbers, alarming trends emerged, particularly affecting vulnerable groups within the community.

The data revealed that around 30% of children, almost 1 in 4 older adults, and nearly 2 in 5 individuals with disabilities experienced nutrition insecurity. Furthermore, the CalFresh participation rate in San Diego County stands at 60%, leaving an estimated 250,000 eligible individuals not yet enrolled. In perspective, an eligible family of 4 with an income limit of \$5,000 a month can get up to \$973 a month in CalFresh benefits.

A critical aspect highlighted at the 5th Annual State of Hunger was the significance of language equity in services, resources, and forms, as approximately 13% of San Diegans have limited English proficiency, surpassing 300,000 individuals. This demographic necessitates additional resources and compassionate guidance when identifying and navigating complex food assistance programs.

Moreover, this event brought attention to the underreporting of essential expenses during the CalFresh application process, resulting in households not receiving the full support they are eligible for. In California, only 10% of eligible families are reporting their dependent care and child expenses. Similarly, a mere 12% of eligible seniors report their medical expenses, indicating a lack of awareness or clarity on what expenses can be reported for assistance programs.

One striking example highlighted the confusion surrounding expense reporting on CalFresh applications for individuals experiencing homelessness. It's not explicitly stated that shelter



expenses, such as motel fees or car-related expenditures for those living in their vehicles, can be reported.

"We cannot ignore the sobering reality laid out in this report," said Anahid Brakke, President & CEO of San Diego Hunger Coalition emphasizing the urgency for collective action to address the multifaceted challenges faced by those grappling with food insecurity in our community. "Receiving CalFresh and other types of food assistance can be the difference between making rent and becoming homeless."

The findings underscore the immediate need for comprehensive policy measures, enhanced outreach efforts, and increased awareness campaigns to bridge the meal gap and ensure that essential resources reach those most in need.

For more information and access to June 2023 data, maps, dashboards by electoral district and issue briefs, visit www.sdhunger.org/research.

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Founded in 1974, the San Diego Hunger Coalition is a 501(c)(3) organization that leads collaborative action to end hunger supported by research, education, and advocacy. Its vision is that everyone in San Diego County has enough food for an active, healthy life. Learn more at www.sdhunger.org.