



**SAN FRANCISCO FOOD BANK
MARIN FOOD BANK**

FEMA Cuts Funding to Provide Enough Food for 483,000 Meals for Hungry in San Francisco and Marin

Additional cuts proposed to nutrition safety net programs to have a dual impact of increased demand for food assistance while reducing available resources

San Francisco, CA (July 27, 2011) – “I don’t know how we’ll make it through the year. We’re going to have to find a way to get by on one third less than what we have had in the past,” said Carol Thollander, committee chair for the St. Francis Episcopal Church food pantry. “First we’ll look to cut back our spending and how we could operate with less. We’d probably have to cut back the number of products we offer and we would definitely have to cut back on more expensive quality food items like protein.” These cutbacks would make a significant impact on the 230 households that receive a bag of groceries each week in the farmers market style food distribution with food provide by the San Francisco Food Bank.

The St. Francis Episcopal Church is one of 42 food pantries, serving 10,308 households in San Francisco and Marin that will have their budgets drastically cut due to a new threshold set by the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) for the allocation of funds to help meet the needs of hungry and homeless people. The EFSP National Board which is chaired by a representative of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) set the threshold qualifying criteria at 11.5 percent unemployment and 14.4 percent poverty – two points above the national averages. In order for a county to qualify, the county itself or one city inside of a county had to meet either the 11.5 percent unemployment rate or the 14.4 percent poverty rate.

San Francisco, with a 9.4 percent unemployment rate and an 11.3 percent poverty rate and Marin, with its eight percent unemployment rate and a seven percent poverty rate were two of the nine counties in California which did not meet the qualifications. The remaining 49 counties which met the threshold set by FEMA received a portion of the nearly \$21 million in funding.

“Not only was the high cost of living in San Francisco not taken into consideration, but San Francisco is being penalized for being a city and county while other counties like San Mateo with lower poverty and unemployment rates will receive their full amount of funding as at least one city inside the county meets the qualifying criteria,” said Paul Ash, Executive Director of the San Francisco Food Bank.

Last year, San Francisco and Marin Counties experienced cuts as part of a 40 percent reduction in national funding. This year marks a new first in the program's 28 year history with San Francisco losing a 100 percent of its funding. This reduction will result in a loss of \$161,000 – or what would be enough food for 483,000 meals this year. As a whole, the county of San Francisco will lose \$592,006 and \$20,000 in Marin.

This cut comes on top of the Food Bank being presented with a new group of people looking for assistance as the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Program which provides cash assistance to low-income families with children recently reduced the 60-month time limit to receive services to a 48-month time limit as well as reducing grants by eight percent, to an average of \$460 per month for a family of three. This translates to an income that is 30 percent less than the amount the federal government has determined necessary to meet basic needs. With further cuts proposed to nutrition safety net programs at the federal, state and local level, these cuts have a dual impact of leading to an increased demand for food assistance while reducing the resources to meet the growing demand.

About the San Francisco Food Bank

Hunger is a serious problem in our community – with 1 in 5 children and 1 in 5 adults at risk of hunger in San Francisco and Marin. Every day, the San Francisco Food Bank sources, collects, sorts, inspects and repackages thousands of pounds of food, then distributes it to soup kitchens, neighborhood grocery centers, school programs and seniors in need.

The San Francisco Food Bank serves over 220,000 people each year throughout San Francisco and Marin counties, and will distribute 43.5 million pounds of food to the community this year – enough for 93,000 meals every day. 60% of what is distributed is fresh fruits and vegetables. For more information, visit www.SFFoodBank.org

Contact: Stacy Newman
Phone: 415-282-1907, ext. 270
Cell: 949-702-6444
snewman@sffb.org