

From: [Cynthia Fuller Quinonez](#)
To: [FGG, Public Comment](#); [Paloma Aguirre](#); [Delatorre, Marianne](#)
Subject: [External] Safety-Net Bridge Agenda Item 12 Today
Date: Thursday, June 25, 2026 10:20:07 AM
Attachments: [District1 Nutrition Security.PDF](#)
[Food Component of Safety Net Bridge Program BL.pdf](#)

My name is Cynthia Fuller Quinonez, a former County of San Diego South Region Food Insecurity Workgroup Co-Chair and health activist addressing food insecurity for more than twenty years, with a special focus on National City to the border.

Following is my comment on today's Agenda Item 12 on the County Supervisor Board Meeting:

AUTHORIZING PARTNER FOOD DISTRIBUTION PILOTS AT STRATEGIC COUNTY FACILITIES IN HIGH-NEED AREAS TO MITIGATE CALFRESH WORK REQUIREMENT

See attached for my fully detailed response, based on Supervisory Monica Montgomery's letter, which is also attached, and its omission of the City of National City zip code 91950 from the table showing which San Diego County zip codes are recommended to receive Safety Net Bridge food benefits on a priority basis.

Perhaps 91950 omission was in error, or a separate plan for National City is being considered; however without confirmation of either, my response assumes neither of these is the case, and that the Safety Net Bridge food priority will, in fact, fail to address National City's most critical need for response to food insecurity, which contributes to some of the worst health impacts in the County.

In summary my comments boil down to the following two points:

1. The County of San Diego cannot afford to exclude 91950 in its planned Safety Net Bridge actions. National City community members, like those in County District 1 as a whole, suffer some of the highest rates of nutrition insecurity here and, again, some of the worst health impacts, as recently reported at the South Region Leadership Team meeting by County staff.

2. National City warrants direct investment in its activities addressing local nutrition needs. Not investing directly here will perpetuate the past of local nutrition responders, including the City of National City, being beholden to the food banks, which are already overburdened, struggling to meet their broad range of priorities. Both economic and health ROI justify direct investment in local solutions, such as the Food Resilience and Nutrition Initiative being pursued by the City of National City with Healthy Culturas Coalition organizations, which is known to County staff and District 1 Supervisor Paloma Aguirre.

County Supervisors, in addressing food insecurity through its Safety Bridge initiative, you cannot meet the stated objectives of this without response to National City needs. Please correct the exclusion of 91950 from Safety-Net Bridge food benefits and take this opportunity to invest in National City responders, building long advocated South Region food system strength, for both project and community success.

Thank you.

Cynthia Fuller Quinonez
National City Healthy Culturas Coalition member and
former South Region Food Insecurity Workgroup Co-chair,
20-year activist addressing local, critical nutrition needs



District 1 Nutrition Security & Resilience

A High-ROI, Equity-Driven Investment for San Diego County

Why District 1 Should Be the Top Safety-Net Bridge Priority

District 1 has **the highest nutrition insecurity in the County** and may well offer the **greatest return on investment**, with action as proposed for improved National City nutrition security, local procurement, and emergency food response, linked to school, senior and military programs.

Together **National City, San Ysidro, Chula Vista, and Barrio Logan** experience:

- **30–40% household nutrition insecurity**
- High child and senior poverty
- High chronic disease burden
- Limited access to full-service grocery stores
- High rent burdens and low wages

Nutrition insecurity here drives:

- Poor health and higher medical costs
- Lower academic performance
- Reduced workforce participation
- Higher public-sector spending

National City uniquely offers:

- **Well-established, cooperative health activism** by Healthy Culturas Coalition members
- **Optimal strategic location** for food resilience infrastructure
- Close proximity to local **military food operations**

A focus on District 1 in general, and National City in particular, during Safety Net Bridge development, can also advance the South Region Food Insecurity Workgroup's long stated aim: **"Everyone in the South Region community has sustainable access to culturally appropriate, affordable, healthy food from local sources through partner collaboration and support."**

Economic Impact: Costs of Poor Nutrition

National City Snapshot

- Population: ~56,000
- Nutrition-insecure residents: **≈16,800**
- Missing meals: **8.4M/year**
- Annual value of missing meals: **\$25.2M** (at \$3 each – a Hunger Coalition #)

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Savings from a 10% reduction in nutrition insecurity: ≈\$7.8M/year

- Healthcare savings: \$3.0M
- Household stability: \$1.8M
- Local economic activity: \$2.1M
- Institutional savings (schools, hospitals, EMS): \$0.9M

Scaling:

- **25% reduction → \$19.5M/year**
- **50% reduction → \$39M/year**

These savings recur annually and compound over time.

Prime Focus: School & Senior Nutrition

National City's school and senior nutrition programs are its largest anti-hunger engine.

School Meals (National School District + SUHSD – National City students only)

- Students served: **10,800**
- Meals/year: **3.9M**
- Annual value: **\$19.5M** (at \$5 each – State of California #)

The number and value of school meals exceed all other food insecurity program benefits:

- CalFresh benefits
- WIC benefits
- All food pantry distributions combined

Senior Nutrition (City of National City)

- Seniors served: **450–500**
- Meals/year: **78,000**
- Prevents institutionalization (\$120,000/person/year)
- Reduces isolation and medical crises

Combined Annual Economic Value

- Direct value: **≈\$81.8M/year**
- Indirect value (workforce, EMS, long-term care): **\$9–14M/year**
- **Total: ≈\$90–95M/year**

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These programs are already the mainstays of local nutrition security—and can deliver even more benefit with added, targeted, collaborative investment.

Missing Backbone: Cold Storage

District 1 lacks the cold storage capacity required for:

- Emergency food response
- AB 1383 food recovery
- Local harvest aggregation
- Lower-cost bulk purchasing
- Higher-quality school and senior meals

Why National City is the right location

- Port + rail + freeway nexus
- Industrial-zoned land
- Proximity to border and airport
- Ideal “capture point” for regional perishables

Economic Value of Collaborative Investment (largely grant-funded)

A **\$2–\$4M investment** can yield **\$9–\$18M/year** in recurring value:

- Reduced food waste (less diversion to landfill): \$3–5M
- Procurement efficiency (bulk savings 8–12%): \$2–4M
- Emergency response savings (avoided food crises): \$1–2M
- Local procurement expansion (additional 5-10%): \$1–3M
- Improved meal quality (reduced processed food reliance): \$2–4M

Cold storage is the single most important infrastructure gap limiting District 1’s resilience.

Local Food Procurement (10% Target)

With an estimated **\$8–\$10M/year** in National City student and senior program food purchases (amount needs verification), meeting a 10% local procurement target would generate:

- **\$900,000/year** in local food purchases
- **\$1.8–\$2.25M/year** in economic activity (multiplier 2.0–2.5)
- **9–18 local jobs**
- Stabilization of farms, fisheries, tribal producers
- Reduced emissions and supply chain risk
- More culturally relevant foods

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Strengthening local procurement is of possible benefit to both civilians and the military.

Improved Military Food Provision: Added Benefit

San Diego's military food supply is known to be:

- Highly centralized
- Dependent on long-distance trucking
- Limited in on-base storage
- Vulnerable to fuel shortages, cyberattacks, and port disruptions

District 1 food infrastructure, especially in National City, can help the military by:

- Shortening supply lines
- Increasing cold storage capacity
- Providing dual civilian–military redundancy
- Supporting rapid response during regional crises

Extending new food infrastructure for military use - at least during crises, maybe day-to-day too
- may yield important local, regional and national strategic advantage.

County Actions Requested

A. Prioritize District 1 Nutrition Security Strategy

- Update high-need census tract data
- Build a lifespan nutrition plan (children → seniors)
- Integrate with CalFresh, WIC, Medi-Cal managed care

B. Co-Invest with National City in School & Senior Nutrition Expansion

- Scratch-cooking kitchens
- Local harvest procurement
- Cold storage + delivery vehicles
- Afterschool & summer meal expansion
- Expanded home-delivered senior meals
- Senior transportation to meal sites

C. Support National City Cold Storage Addition

- Dual-use emergency + institutional cold storage
- Support for AB 1383 recovery
- Support for local food procurement

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D. Use County Purchasing Power to Increase Local Procurement

- Contract with local growers, fishermen, tribal producers
- Prioritize culturally relevant foods

8. Bottom Line

District 1 in general and, within this, National City in particular, has:

- The **highest need for nutrition security and resilience investment**
- The **highest potential economic return, plus health and economic justice benefit**
- The **strongest strategic location** for food resilience infrastructure addition
- A direct connection to **military installations warranting benefit**

Co-investing in the nutrition security, local procurement, and emergency food response proposed for National City is a **high-ROI strategy** for benefit to families, seniors, schools and their students, local harvesters, US military here, and the regional economy.

Together the County and National City could well make District 1 a **statewide model** for lifespan-based, locally sourced nutrition -- both daily and during crises -- creating value far beyond their own jurisdictions.