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**Congresswoman Jackie Speier Convenes Hunger Issues Summit:  
County Residents Face Food Insecurity**

**Redwood City, Calif.**—On October 18, Congresswoman Jackie Speier, along with dozens of community advocates and representatives from nonprofit and government organizations, held a Hunger Issues Summit at the Sobrato Center for Nonprofits to address food insecurity in San Mateo County. At the summit, Santa Clara University’s Leavey School of Business and Second Harvest Food Bank released the San Mateo County Hunger Index, which shows that the number of people who cannot meet their daily food needs in San Mateo County continues to grow. The County of San Mateo, Human Services Agency, also released striking CalFresh (food stamps) data that demonstrate a rapid acceleration in CalFresh use despite the recovering economy.

“Hunger can no longer be a hidden issue in San Mateo County; it is a personal crisis that our friends, neighbors and family members face on a daily basis,” said Speier. “Many do not ask for help because of the social stigma.”

Another significant barrier to a nutritious diet is the high cost of living in San Mateo County where many households must choose between a high quality diet and housing. To qualify for CalFresh, a household of three typically needs to earn less than \$2,070 per month while the average monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$2,159 (County of San Mateo, Department of Housing).

“Access to healthy food is an effective prevention strategy that improves our community’s health and well-being,” said San Mateo County Board President Adrienne Tissier. “Compassion and access to food do, in fact, make our community stronger.”

The Hunger Index measures the gap between the need for food and the ability of individuals to get it with the help of government programs like CalFresh and food assistance organizations like Second Harvest Food Bank. In San Mateo County, that gap was 47 million meals in 2011, the same as 2010. While the need for food increased 5%, food assistance grew by 12%. According to the Hunger Index, the growth in food assistance was led by increased enrollment in CalFresh.

**CalFresh Use in San Mateo County**

- 40,000 San Mateo County residents received CalFresh in the last fiscal year, nearly double the number served in 2009-10
- The greatest increases (300%+) in CalFresh use have been on the coast and in Belmont, Burlingame, Millbrae and San Bruno
- Applications for CalFresh have increased by 35% over the last three years

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County residents can apply for CalFresh online at [www.benefitscalwin.org](http://www.benefitscalwin.org) or they can request an application by phone and find office locations by calling (800) 223-8383. Second Harvest Food Bank can also help residents apply for CalFresh. Anyone who needs food should call Second Harvest's Food Connection hotline at (800) 984-3663 to connect to food assistance programs, including CalFresh.

The San Mateo County Hunger Summit is sponsored by Thrive: the Alliance of Nonprofits of San Mateo County, Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, and County of San Mateo, Human Services Agency.

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