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PRIVATE SECTOR COALITION RAISES MORE THAN \$400,000 TO FIGHT HUNGER IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Business Leaders Fighting Hunger awarded its first \$75,000 grant to Food is Medicine, an initiative that links health and food providers to reduce the number of hungry residents in the county.

Rockville, Maryland – On June 1st, a coalition of Montgomery County businesses, calling themselves Business Leaders Fighting Hunger, pledged to invest \$500,000 to significantly reduce the number of hungry residents in Montgomery County throughout the next four years. Today, the group announced that in just three months since its launch it has raised more than \$400,000 and has awarded its first \$75,000 grant to Food is Medicine.

Food is Medicine is a collaborative program focused on making policy, system, and environment change by bringing together health and food providers to identify diabetic patients who are food insecure and link them to steady sources of food. The program has shown very promising initial results. Participants reported a 26 percent increase in food security. In addition, almost 80 percent of participants had improved health outcomes through better diabetes management. With this new grant, Food is Medicine will scale up to serve an additional 800 residents. The effort will take place primarily in East County, which has been identified as the area with the highest food insecurity rate by the Montgomery County Food Council.

The project is a collaboration among county government, nonprofits and healthcare providers including [Montgomery County Primary Care Coalition](#), [Mobile Med](#), [Community Health and Empowerment through Education and Research \(CHEER\)](#), [Manna Food Center](#), [Montgomery County Food Council](#), [Crossroads Community Food Network](#), [Hungry Harvest](#), [Institute for Public Health Innovation \(IPHI\)](#), [Adventist Healthcare](#), and the [Healthcare Initiative Foundation](#).

Throughout the next four years, Business Leaders Fighting Hunger, will continue to invest in programs, like Food is Medicine, that tackle the root causes of hunger. The coalition will work in tandem with county government and nonprofits to identify and support programs whose goals are in line with the goals of the county's [Food Security Plan](#).

"Many of the Plan's recommendations remain underfunded, and limited grant funds leave little room for pilot programs that have potential to make an impact," said Shondra B. Jenkins, co-founder of Business Leaders Fighting Hunger and Executive Director of Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation. "Business Leaders Fighting Hunger will help close this funding gap by infusing much needed new dollars into Montgomery County's neediest communities."

"Successful businesses have the dollars to make a big difference in people's lives," said Andy Burness, co-founder of Business Leaders, former chair of the Montgomery County Food Security Collaborative and president of Burness, a communications firm that has been based in the county for more than three decades. "We're pleased to see that businesses are finally stepping up and encourage others to join us because there is so much more to be done. A thriving county must feed all of its people, not only because it's the right thing to do, but because hungry people simply aren't productive people. We should all want every resident to reach her or his potential."

Business Leaders Fighting Hunger was co-founded by [Sodexo](#) and [Burness](#). Members include [Atlantic Electric Supply](#), [Bass Accounting & Tax Services](#), [Bendler & Company](#), [Bethesda Magazine](#), [Clark Construction](#), David R and Deborah S Lambert Charitable Trust, and [SmithPilot](#). The coalition intends to engage many more businesses throughout the next four years. Any that wish to join should contact Luisa Guaracao at lguaracao@burness.com.

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