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## **Shapiro Administration Fights for Food Banks, Farmers, Discussing Painful Impact of Unlawful Federal Funding Cuts**

*Lt. Governor and Ag Secretary lead Pittsburgh roundtable on regional food security challenges in wake of cancelled USDA contract.*

*Governor Josh Shapiro's proposed \$8 million food assistance increase, plus championed initiatives to tackle root causes of food insecurity, including raising the minimum wage and cutting costs for Pennsylvanians.*

**Duquesne, PA** – In the wake of **Governor Josh Shapiro's** [appeal of USDA's decision](#) to cancel \$13 million in funding to Pennsylvania under the Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program, **Lt. Governor Austin Davis** and **Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding** led a roundtable at the **Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank**.

Today's discussion brought food bank leaders, farmers, and stakeholders together to explore the region's challenges that would be exacerbated by federal funding cuts. In contrast, the group discussed the positive impact proposed increases and initiatives in Governor Shapiro's 2025-26 budget would have on Pennsylvania food banks, the regional food system, and area farmers.

"Investing in Pennsylvania farmers and helping them do what they do best -- feed people -- is an investment in our future," said **Lt. Governor Davis**. "That's why the Shapiro-Davis Administration has pushed for more investments to support agriculture -- while supporting Pennsylvania families, students and seniors. These are proven programs that work. They're the definition of win-win -- farmers get paid to produce food. Folks in need can eat fresh, healthy food."

Last month, the USDA abruptly canceled Pennsylvania's agreement with the federal government under the Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program. The agreement would have provided \$13 million in federal funding over the next three years for food banks statewide to purchase food from 189 Pennsylvania farms.

According to [Feeding America](#), more than one in eight Pennsylvanians struggle with hunger. At a time when food banks are seeing record-high demand due to high costs and our farmers are facing some of the toughest market conditions in decades -- we need to be supporting Pennsylvania farmers and families, not making it harder for them

to get by. Pennsylvania is one of the only states in the nation that uses LFPA funds to exclusively support in-state farmers, ensuring federal dollars stay in-state and go directly to Pennsylvania farmers.

USDA's decision would result in the three food banks serving the Pittsburgh region losing an estimated \$2.5 million. That's more than 2.96 million pounds of food, and nearly 2.5 million meals. Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank would lose 11% of its food-purchasing budget. Westmoreland Food Bank would lose 18% of theirs.

“With the bipartisan support of the **General Assembly** and the overwhelming generosity of Pennsylvania farmers, we have built successful programs to tackle food insecurity and put healthy, nutritious, local food on the tables of families across Pennsylvania,” said **Secretary Redding**. “We simply can't afford to turn back time and undermine the progress we have made together for Pennsylvania families and farms.”

**Governor Josh Shapiro** proposed increases of **\$4 million** to the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System and **\$4 million** to the State Food Purchase Program, both programs connect low-income Pennsylvanians with healthy, local food through 14 food banks across the state. These proposed increases would bring the total for these programs to **\$34.6 million**. The Governor is also championing initiatives that reduce food insecurity by tackling its root causes, including raising the minimum wage and cutting costs for Pennsylvanians.

“Our charitable food network fills an invaluable role in our communities through the work they do every day to help so no one has to go hungry, no matter their circumstances,” said **Human Services Deputy Secretary Hoa Pham**. “Other anti-hunger programs like our Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program work symbiotically with our charitable food network, and any changes on either side of this partnership risk access to food for many who rely on these systems. Pennsylvanians cannot afford the personal and community-level risk of more people going hungry.”

Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank distributes an estimated 48 million meals in southwestern PA annually, engaging more than 8,300 volunteers and 1,000 partnerships and programs in its network. The agency is a critical partner in food assistance efforts distributing fresh, Pennsylvania-grown produce, dairy, and protein to families and individuals throughout the region.

“Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank is seeing record numbers of people seeking food assistance, including many working families who are reaching out for the first time,” said **Food Bank President and CEO Lisa Scales**. “We could not do this work without our partnerships with farmers, food pantries, community volunteers, and government agencies at all levels. The proposed increase of \$8 million in the state budget will go a long way towards helping us provide much needed food into the community. Thank you to Governor Shapiro, Lt. Governor Davis, and Secretary Redding for prioritizing funding that supports both farmers and families.”

[Harvest Valley Farms](#), a fourth-generation vegetable farm in Butler County, donates surplus produce to area food banks through the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture program pays to process, package and transport donated products from Pennsylvania farms to food banks, connecting low-income families with healthy, locally produced food. **Art King**, one of the farm's co-owners joined the Lt. Governor and Sec. Redding and food bank managers in emphasizing the importance of the funding to area farmers.

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Pennsylvania's economy, with over 53,000 farms generating \$132.5 billion annually and supporting 600,000 jobs. **Governor Shapiro's** [Economic Development Strategy](#) places agriculture at the forefront, recognizing it as essential to the Commonwealth's growth.

Since taking office, he has prioritized funding to strengthen the industry and enhance Pennsylvania's national agricultural reputation. The Governor's investments, including the creation of the [nation's first Agricultural Innovation Grant](#) and the revival of the Fresh Food Financing Initiative, are key to ensuring a stable, sustainable food system in Pennsylvania and [supporting Pennsylvania's farmers](#).

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