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How is Kaiser Permanente working to advance the Food as Medicine movement?

Kaiser Permanente has a long history of addressing obesity as well as nutrition and food insecurity. We believe everyone in the nation has the right to the most basic of human needs – nutritious food – and that nobody can reach or maintain their best health without being able to access and afford healthy meals.

We have a growing portfolio of interventions to support Kaiser Permanente members experiencing food insecurity, including connecting our

members to government assistance programs that stretch food budgets and support self-sufficiency. These include outreach campaigns to help low-income Kaiser Permanente members apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), providing added phone support to members who need extra help filling out applications in their states. We have reached out to 5.6 million members since starting these interventions in 2019 and have helped 125,000 members apply for these programs, closing the gap between eligibility and enrollment for members who would otherwise miss out on these vital federal benefits.

Kaiser Permanente is also working to build the evidence around Food is Medicine to support scaling effective programs within health care. We believe more evidence is needed about what works and under what conditions for healthcare to fully embrace Food is Medicine and deploy interventions

at scale. To this end, we're supporting a number of studies to improve nutrition and health among our members, including medically tailored meals and produce prescription programs, and we're sharing results from these programs with the broader field.

How can the healthcare industry make it easier for patients to make healthier food choices?

The connection between nutrition and having access to healthy food, and how these things impact a person's health is clear, with the wide-ranging chronic health complications of hunger driving the cost of health care up an estimated \$160 billion each year (according to the Bread of the World Institute).

Healthcare organizations can have a direct role in influencing food choices and overall health with interventions that deliver healthy food to patients with diet-related conditions, which will improve clinical outcomes, quality of life, and

equity. As trusted health partners, we also can serve as intermediaries between our members and the publicly-funded nutrition programs that exist to support health and well-being, but historically go underutilized. And as anchor institutions in our communities, we can be collation builders and important investors in community-based programs and solutions. These are some of the priorities Kaiser Permanente set with our \$50 million commitment last year to support programs that increase food and nutrition security and improve health outcomes for the country's most vulnerable populations.

How has the food as medicine policy space evolved over the last year?

There is quite a buzz across the nation about Food is Medicine and the role of healthcare as part of the solution—especially on the heels of last year's White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. The national dialogue is elevating the thinking around how healthcare providers can best treat

and prevent diet-related diseases, especially for individuals who are experiencing food and nutrition insecurity. The problems of hunger, poor nutrition, and diet-related chronic disease are systemic and disproportionately impact people of color. We are at a critical moment in this country, and we must continue to build on the momentum that has brought food-security and nutrition to the forefront in recent years to ensure nobody goes hungry or can't afford to eat healthy meals.

From a policy perspective, we would love to see the evidence continue to develop for FIM programs.

In addition, we would like to see continuing efforts to improve the application process for all nutrition assistance programs.

How can we continue to inspire change and commitments?

We know collaboration is key to

advancing the Food is Medicine movement, so we're partnering with stakeholders across the spectrum, including community-based organizations, academic institutions, national policy advocacy organizations, and food innovators to capitalize on the momentum from the 2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health and help move us all forward. We're also serving on a number of task forces and advisory committees to help inform and advance the national dialogue on FIM. Convenings like this policy summit can help foster collaboration, partnership, and commitment to advancing the FIM movement.

What are you looking forward to at the Food as Medicine: Policy Summit?

This event is an opportunity to foster collaboration, partnership, and commitment to the Food is Medicine movement as we work to improve health and nutrition across the U.S.