



Contact: Shannon Franklin, Consciously, Inc.

[shannon@weareconsciously.com](mailto:shannon@weareconsciously.com)

520.401.5644

## **PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release: Friday, September 20, 2024

# **New Jersey Announces Inaugural Garden State Conference on Food Security**

**The New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) will host the inaugural *Garden State Conference on Food Security: Setting a Table for All, for Always* on Friday, October 4 in Mt. Laurel and via livestream**

Trenton, NJ – The New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) announced today the *2024 Garden State Conference on Food Security: Setting a Table for All, for Always*. This conference will convene community members, policymakers, advocates, community organizations, farmers, grantmakers, school personnel, healthcare providers, local food pantries, community kitchens, academic researchers and others to highlight the momentum in New Jersey’s collaborative efforts to ensure food security for everyone in the state and beyond. As part of the office’s broader work as a convener of organizations and individuals working toward statewide food security, the conference will be the largest and most cross-sector gathering of people thinking beyond emergency, charitable feeding efforts and moving toward holistic approaches that improve opportunities for individuals, families, and communities to heal themselves.

The recently released [USDA Household Food Security in the United States in 2023](#) report states that, despite a rise in New Jersey’s overall food insecurity rates since 2018, New Jersey’s household and childhood food insecurity rates remain below the national average. This reflects the State’s continued bold actions to address food insecurity.

This conference will feature special guest New Jersey Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin, under whose leadership the State has increased investment, improved coordination of services with non-profits, and developed innovative approaches to scale-up the work to address the root causes of food insecurity. It will also feature Katie S. Martin, one of the nation's foremost thought-leaders on food security and author of *Reinventing Food Banks and Pantries, New Tools to End Hunger*. Other special guests include Amy Lazarus Yaroch, PhD, Executive Director of the Center for Nutrition & Health Impact (CNHI), Eric Calloway, PhD, CNHI Senior Research Scientist, and the More Than Food, LLC consulting team.

Together in person and online, New Jerseyans who embrace the belief that ending food insecurity long-term is about more than addressing the availability of food, and colleagues shifting to this forward-thinking perspective will participate in sessions including: *The Power of People and Policy*, *Shaping the Space We Collectively Hold for the Issue of Food Insecurity*, and *Taking Action: Resources for Community Needs*. The day will culminate with an overview of New Jersey's food security action plan by Mark Dinglasan, Executive Director of OFSA.

Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in breakout sessions, network, learn about the latest research and best practices in food security, and hear promising examples of holistic work around the state.

"This conference is a critical step in our work to end food insecurity in New Jersey," said Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin. "This fight is close to my heart, and I've been blessed to work with amazing partners who are on the frontlines of this fight. We've made tremendous progress against hunger, leading the nation with innovative approaches and increased investment. Collaboration has been essential to that progress and will be the foundation of a hunger-free future for New Jersey. By bringing together experts from across the state and nation, we will continue to learn from one other and help our neighbors in need."

The New Jersey OFSA is the only food security advocacy team in the United States placed at the highest level of state government, making New Jersey a leader in the food security space and setting the standard for the conversations about food security needed across the nation.

"Food security work is not about 'them' and us. It's about all of us. We are hosting this event to connect conversations, innovations, and community-led visions that we knew were happening around the state. Food insecurity is a complex and dynamic issue. The challenge didn't arise from one singular community, sector or policy, and neither can long-term solutions. This conference continues our work of making true food security a reality for all New Jerseyans in a big way," said Mark Dinglasan, Executive Director of OFSA. "I encourage everyone interested in addressing food insecurity to join us for this."

The 2024 Garden State Conference on Food Security will be held on Friday, October 4, 2024, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm EST at The Westin Mount Laurel (555 Fellowship Rd, Mount Laurel, NJ 08054).

A livestream will also be available for those who cannot attend in person. There is no cost to register for the conference. More information and registration is online at <https://www.nj.gov/foodsecurity/our-work/annual-conference/index.shtml>

###