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**New Urban Libraries Council White Paper Calls on
Libraries to Address Food Justice**

WASHINGTON, DC – The Urban Libraries Council (ULC) announces today the release of its latest white paper, "[Food is a Right: Libraries and Food Justice](#)," which addresses the current state of food insecurity across North America and the strategic role libraries play in addressing local needs. Included in the paper are descriptions of programs, services and activities leading libraries are implementing and recommendations for other library leaders to follow in ensuring their community is nourished.

Public libraries have been supporting food access, advocating for food quality and providing nutrition information in their communities for decades through initiatives such as seed libraries, meal distribution and SNAP/WIC enrollment support. To guide library leaders in taking meaningful steps forward in their work on addressing this vital issue, this white paper includes effective and replicable practices to guide the field in co-creating solutions with local communities.

"We know children can't learn well if they are hungry, and we believe food is a basic human right," said ULC President and CEO Brooks Rainwater. "As trusted community anchors, public libraries are well-positioned to use their resources and relationships to positively address food insecurity for people of color. Access to food and nutrition information is an equity issue, and many libraries have made providing programs and services in distressed neighborhoods a priority."

The enduring racial wealth divide in the U.S. economy shaped by systemic racism has profoundly impacted the food security of communities of color. Black households experienced food insecurity at 22%, with Latinx families at 17%, in contrast to the 7% white families experienced. Black households consistently have the highest rate of food insecurity in the United States, with an estimated 24% of the Black population experiencing food

insecurity in 2020. Research has shown the higher poverty rate for Black Americans, a result of discriminatory policies and practices, increases the likelihood of experiencing hunger.

In 2022, ULC formed a new Libraries and Food Security initiative funded by a one-year planning grant from the Walmart Foundation. With the support of the Association for Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL), ULC surveyed members from both organizations on their current food security activities and the unique food issues in rural and urban settings. The survey and other grant activities informed this white paper and helped develop best practices for public libraries to expand their role in assisting black and brown families with attaining nutritious food.

In December 2022, ULC convened 20 organizations including library representatives from urban and rural areas and several outside food experts for visioning activities, panel presentations and peer discussions focused on the role of libraries in food justice. The conveners explored the library's role in the food justice space, provided examples of successful (and in some cases unsuccessful) programs, and assessed their capacity to provide programs/resources and form partnerships to sustain the work.

For more information about ULC's Libraries and Food Security Initiative, visit urbanlibraries.org.

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About the Urban Libraries Council

The Urban Libraries Council is an innovation and impact tank of North America's leading public library systems. ULC drives cutting-edge research and strategic partnerships to elevate the power of libraries as essential, transformative institutions. More than 160 urban member libraries in the U.S. and Canada rely on ULC to identify significant challenges facing today's communities and provide new tools and techniques to help libraries achieve stronger outcomes in education, digital equity, workforce and economic development, and race and social equity.