

June 8, 2026

U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Prisons

Re: Federal Bureau of Prisons Food Service & Commissary Operations Solicitation

Dear Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche, Director Marshall, and Deputy Director Joshua Smith,

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) and Carceral Nutrition Project (CNP) are deeply concerned about the Federal Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) recent requests for information (RFI) to explore outsourcing food service, commissary, and health care. We urge you not to privatize these core institutional functions that affect people's health and well-being.

On May 4, 2026, we published a report, [*Private Food, Public Harm: Privatized Food Service in Prisons and Jails*](#), which found that privatized food service in US prisons and jails raises serious concerns about nutrition, food safety, and oversight. The report focused on Aramark Correctional Services, which has the largest share (35 percent) of the US correctional food services market. If the agency proceeds to a formal solicitation, we anticipate that Aramark would be the leading bidder for food service. Its subsidiary, Union Supply Group, would likely bid for the commissary contract. When food service and commissary contracts are held by the same parent company, inadequate and inedible food in the dining hall can net the very same company big profits from resulting commissary sales. As you may be aware, Aramark is currently being [sued](#) in federal court for practices that allegedly violate consumer protection laws in West Virginia, where the company holds contracts for both food service and commissary in state prisons.

Despite the fact that the food service RFI makes no mention of nutrition, we understand that the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is working to improve the menu and quality of food across its facilities in accordance with the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA). Our report indicates that outsourcing these functions is unlikely to result in better quality food or healthier federal prisons.

Our report findings are based on a review of over 130 reports and articles, in-depth interviews with key informants, and a litigation analysis to assess how outsourcing food service affects the health and well-being of incarcerated people:

- **Nutrition:** Private companies such as Aramark commonly fall short of providing adequate portions of nutritious meals in carceral facilities. We found evidence of discrepancies between contracted menus and specific recommendations of the 2020-2025 DGA, which emphasize eating a variety of fruits and vegetables, increasing whole grains, and limiting refined grains and sodium.

- **Palatability:** Unpalatable meals are a consistent experience in prisons and jails where food service is managed by companies like Aramark. Common issues include lack of flavor, lack of variety, under- or over-cooking, and serving meals at the wrong temperature.
- **Food Safety:** Contractors' food safety practices are inconsistent, putting incarcerated people at risk for acute illness wherever they fall short. Even putting health risks aside, serving spoiled food or food contaminated with maggots violates basic human dignity of incarcerated people.
- **Costs:** Multiple states have projected that outsourcing carceral food service would create significant cost savings. In the case of Aramark, we found evidence of cost cutting at the expense of quality, overbilling, and contract violations, casting doubt on the value the company claims to provide to its taxpayer-funded correctional clients.

Our research found that food quality and safety worsened following privatization in many jurisdictions. It is also unclear whether privatizing food service truly cuts costs. Instead, evidence suggests that privatization worsens quality and exacerbates harms.

We respectfully request that you reconsider introducing a profit motive into such an integral part of the Federal BOP population's health and quality of life, and urge you not to privatize food service and commissary in federal prisons.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Center for Science in the Public Interest
Carceral Nutrition Project



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Center for Science in the Public Interest envisions thriving communities supported by equitable, sustainable, and science-based solutions advancing nutrition, food safety, and health. Founded in 1971, the Center for Science in the Public Interest advocates for evidence-based and community-informed policies on nutrition, food safety and health; holds government agencies

and corporations to account; and empowers consumers with independent, unbiased information to live healthier lives.

Carceral Nutrition Project is a nonprofit led by people with histories of incarceration working to improve food and nutrition in jails and prison.