

June 8, 2026

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

Dear House and Senate Judiciary Chairs, Ranking Members, and Committee Members,

Please exercise your oversight authority over the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), specifically regarding any plans to contract out core institutional functions including food service, health services, and commissary operations.

A report released this month by the Carceral Nutrition Project and the Center for Science in the Public Interest, "[Private Food, Public Harm](#)," documents the track record of privatized prison food contractors like Aramark in state and local corrections systems. Our findings are concerning. Aramark has been sued in over 500 lawsuits challenging carceral food service. A thorough literature review and key informant interviews indicate nutritional shortcomings, widespread food safety concerns, security lapses, and a pattern of cost-cutting that falls hardest on the roughly 405,000 people Aramark feeds daily in prisons and jails across 17 states. These are not isolated incidents. They are the predictable result of a business model that prioritizes profit over the people in its care.

The federal prison system feeds nearly 160,000 people daily, and food service is a basic obligation of custody. When the Bureau of Prisons has contracted out services in the [past](#), accountability has been lost. Congress loses visibility, incarcerated people lose recourse and dignity, and the public loses their trust that its prisons are meeting even minimum standards of human decency.

The BOP is already operating under severe strain — chronic understaffing, mandatory overtime, and significant budget pressure. Introducing private food contractors into that environment does not solve these problems. It creates new ones, while diffusing the lines of responsibility that make oversight possible.

We urge you to:

- Oppose outsourcing of BOP food service and other core functions until Congress has received and reviewed a transparent accounting of the consequences for incarcerated people, staff, and taxpayers
- Demand full disclosure of any BOP communications, studies, proposals, or procurement activities related to outsourcing food service or other institutional functions
- Require an independent assessment of the nutritional, health, safety, and long-term fiscal impacts of any proposed contracting — not short-term budget projections alone
- Convene oversight hearings to examine the risks of privatizing federal correctional functions before any contracts are awarded

- Commission the National Academy of Medicine to establish enforceable minimum nutritional standards for incarcerated people that apply regardless of whether food service is operated by the Bureau or by a private vendor

Food is not a frill or a privilege, it is a human right. It is health, it is morale, and it is a basic condition of humane custody. The evidence of harm from privatized food service in prisons and jails in state and local jurisdictions is clear. Congress should not wait for the federal system to repeat those failures before taking action towards improvements.

We welcome the opportunity to provide a briefing on our report findings and their implications for any federal contracting under consideration. We ask you to use your oversight authority now, before BOP decisions related to privatizing food service, health service, and commissary operations are made behind closed doors.

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.