FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Feeding Alabama CEO Laura Lester Announces Retirement After 13 Years of Leadership

COO Kim Lawkis Named as Incoming CEO

Alabama — Feeding Alabama, the statewide association representing Alabama's eight Feeding America food banks, today announced that Laura Lester, the organization's founding CEO, will retire after 13 years of leadership and 20 years in the food banking field. The Feeding Alabama Board of Directors has named current Chief Operating Officer Kim Lawkis as the organization's next CEO, effective September 1, 2026.

Under Laura's leadership since 2013, Feeding Alabama grew from a part-time effort into a statewide association with a full staff and a $5 million annual budget, representing eight food banks and 1,200 partner agencies across all 67 Alabama counties. During Laura's tenure, Feeding Alabama has secured more than $40 million in funding for its member food banks.

Under Laura's leadership, Feeding Alabama also led major policy and program wins expanding children's access to food across the state. Its Summer Food Service Program work reached approximately 20,000 children and distributed more than 1 million meals from 2015–2024 through roughly 100 sites in 20 counties, and the organization advanced statewide Summer EBT implementation to extend that access even further during the summer months. Most recently, the Summer Meals Initiative (SMI), created in 2025 to feed kids during the summer months when access to school meals is limited, has reached over 1,000 children at 15 locations and served more than 55,000 meals since its launch.

> *"Leading Feeding Alabama for these thirteen years has been the honor of my career. When we started, this was a part-time effort with a handful of people who believed Alabama's food banks were stronger working together than apart. Today it's a full statewide association, and that growth belongs to our team, our board and our partner agencies as much as to me. I'm retiring at a moment when the organization is on solid footing, with strong leadership ready to carry it forward, and I couldn't be prouder of what we've built or more confident in where it's headed. Thank you to everyone who has been part of this work."*

— Laura Lester, outgoing CEO, Feeding Alabama

The Board of Directors, following its governance authority to approve the hiring of Feeding Alabama's CEO, voted to name Kim Lawkis as Laura's successor after a thoughtful evaluation process. Lawkis will officially assume the role of CEO on September 1, 2026, with Lester remaining through September 24, 2026 to ensure a smooth transition.

> *“On behalf of the Executive Committee and the full Feeding Alabama Board of Directors, we are deeply grateful to Laura for thirteen years of leadership that built Feeding Alabama into the statewide force it is today. Her legacy is one of partnership, growth, and unwavering commitment to ending hunger in our state. After a thorough and thoughtful process, the Board is confident that Kim Lawkis is the right leader to build on that foundation, and we look forward to supporting her as she steps into this role.”*

— Nicole Williams, Board Chair, Feeding Alabama, and CEO, Community Food Bank of Central Alabama

> *"Working alongside Laura for over a decade has been one of the greatest privileges of my career. She took a vision and built Feeding Alabama into an organization that has transformed how our state responds to hunger, and I’m incredibly grateful for the mentorship, trust, and example she’s given me along the way. She has challenged me, encouraged me, and prepared me for this moment in ways I’ll always appreciate,”* said **Kim Lawkis, incoming CEO, Feeding Alabama**. *“I’m honored that the Board has entrusted me with this responsibility, and I don’t take it lightly. I’m excited to build on the remarkable foundation Laura has created, continue strengthening the partnerships that make our work possible, and lead Feeding Alabama into its next chapter while always honoring the legacy she leaves behind."*

Kim Lawkis has served as Feeding Alabama's Chief Operating Officer since 2022 and previously as Director of Policy & Programs since 2017. She brings 14+ years of nonprofit leadership experience, including oversight of federal grant compliance and statewide advocacy, and currently serves as the Chair of Alabama VOAD.

Feeding Alabama remains financially and operationally strong, with continued focus on its mission to end hunger across the state. More information about Kim Lawkis' vision for Feeding Alabama will be shared in the coming weeks.

Read the full announcement in Alabama Daily News:
https://aldailynews.com/feeding-alabama-ceo-laura-lester-to-step-down-after-13-years/

Laura Lester Legacy Giving Fund

In honor of Lester’s legacy and her two decades of service to food banking, supporters are invited to make a gift to help carry Feeding Alabama’s work forward. Contributions may be made through the Laura Lester Legacy Giving Fund.

ABOUT FEEDING ALABAMA

Feeding Alabama is the state association of food banks working to end hunger across Alabama. Through its network of eight member food banks, Feeding Alabama supports hunger-relief efforts in all 67 counties by advancing advocacy, strengthening partnerships, coordinating statewide programs, and helping connect families with the food and resources they need

Our Members: Community Food Bank of Central Alabama, Feeding the Gulf Coast, Food Bank of North Alabama, Heart of Alabama Food Bank, Food Bank of East Alabama, Selma Area **Food Bank, West Alabama Food Bank, Wiregrass Area Food Bank.**

You can learn more at **www.feedingalabama.org** or follow us on **Facebook**, **Instagram** and **LinkedIn**.

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