



New York Organ Donor Network

New York Organ Donor Network Testimony
To The Committee on Health of the New York City Council
Presented by Lauren Shields, Volunteer, Marketing and Communications
5.21.12

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My name is Lauren Shields, I am 12 years old and I am an organ transplant survivor.

Three years ago I had a life saving heart transplant. My condition came out of no where catching us all by surprise when I suddenly went into heart failure. A simple virus had attacked my heart. I remember when I was told I would need a transplant I wasn't really sure what it meant, but I knew I was very sick, and getting worse. I remember at one point, saying to mommy that I hoped my new heart would come soon, because I didn't think the old one was going to be able to wait.

The waiting is a very scary time no matter how old you are or the type of organ you are waiting for. You go to sleep hoping that the call will come but when you open your eyes in the morning you realize it didn't. In New York State someone dies every 13 hours waiting for that call to come.

It has not been an easy journey but I am so grateful that I am alive. Make no mistake about it, the reason I am here is not just because of my story, I am here because of 13 year old Linda, who loves school and hates missing it but is absent often because she needs a new kidney, for 33 year old Jason who lives in Brooklyn and is a father in need of a kidney, and for 8 year old Noah who died waiting for a heart transplant in a New York City Hospital. We live in New York, the greatest place in the entire world and we can do better

Not a day goes by that I don't think about the angel that saved my life. I am so grateful to my donor family. I've made a promise that I will spend the rest of my life trying to help raise awareness for organ and tissue donation in tribute to the angel that saved my life.

I am visiting with you today to ask for your support on saving lives. I know that together we can make a difference. I spent a good part of last year lobbying in the NY State Senate in order to pass a bill called Lauren's Law which would make the donor question on the DMV form mandatory to answer. The law was

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named after me but the bill is for all of us. It's for those that gave, those that received and for the thousands that still wait.

Today you have an opportunity to take the important steps necessary to help the thousands of New Yorkers that are suffering just like I was.

Thank you for allowing me to share my story and please say "yes" to saving lives. Thank you.



Testimony of

Louise Feld
Policy Associate for Food and Economic Security
Citizens' Committee for Children

Before the
New York City Council
Committee on Health

Hearing on the Resolution to Reauthorize an
Adequately Funded Farm Bill that
Creates a Strong and Healthy Food System

May 21, 2012

Good morning. My name is Louise Feld and I am the Policy Associate for Food and Economic Security at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is a 68-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. I would like to thank Chair Maria del Carmen Arroyo and the members of the Health Committee for holding this hearing today. CCC would also like to thank the City Council for its on-going commitment to helping all New Yorkers access healthy, affordable food.

CCC strongly supports the Council's Preconsidered Resolution, which calls on the United States Congress to pass, and the United States President to reauthorize, a Farm Bill that is adequately funded and creates a strong and healthy food system. The Farm Bill is the single largest source of support for several of the nutrition assistance programs that comprise our nation's food safety net, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP" or "Food Stamps") and the Emergency Food Assistance Program ("TEFAP"). The Farm Bill is therefore critical to New York City and the food security of its residents.

The data about the staggering number of our City's families who live in poverty and/or are unable to consistently access food make clear how important the Farm Bill is to New York City. According to recently-released U.S. Census data, in 2010 the City's overall poverty rate was 20.1 percent, which meant that one in every five New Yorkers lived in poverty.¹ Even starker that year was the City's 30 percent child poverty rate, which had grown an overwhelming 10.8 percent since 2009.² By the close of 2010, over 1.8 million New Yorkers received SNAP assistance, including 30 percent of New York City families with children – a 53 percent increase in the share of New York City families participating in the program in a three-year period.³ In addition, soup kitchens and food pantries in all five boroughs have reported that there has been a "great" increase in the number of families with children who "used their services" in recent years.⁴

Many New York City children and families who struggle with poverty also face great difficulties in their efforts to access nutritious foods. The consequences of such a lack of access are devastating to children's health and well-being. One such immediate result is evident in New York City's childhood obesity rates, as recent New York City data show that 20.7 percent of New York City public school children in kindergarten through eighth grades are obese.⁵

Despite the obvious existence of poverty, food insecurity, and threats to children's health – both in New York City and throughout the United States – the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee recently approved a draft of the 2012 Farm Bill that will further devastate,

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2010.

² Id.

³ Id.

⁴ "Hungry New Yorkers Barely Hang On: 2010 Annual Hunger Survey Report." The New York City Coalition Against Hunger, November 2010.

⁵ Anemona Hartocollis, "Obesity Rate Falls for New York Schoolchildren." *New York Times*. Dec. 15, 2011, accessed January 27, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/schoolbook/2011/12/15/obesity-in-new-york-children-on-the-decline-officials-say/>.

rather than assist, food insecure children and families. This recent version of the Farm Bill would result in an over \$4 billion cut to SNAP over a ten-year period. The cut will result from limitations imposed on the States' abilities to coordinate the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program ("LIHEAP" or "Heat and Eat") and SNAP. Such a cut would impact as many as 300,000 New York State families, almost 200,000 of whom are in New York City.

Families are still struggling as a result of the economic crisis, and cuts to SNAP – a program proven to feed families and prevent them from falling deeper into poverty – are simply unconscionable. Moreover, SNAP's role as an economic engine that brings federal dollars into our local supermarkets, bodegas, and farmers' markets cannot be ignored. We therefore thank the Council for including in its Resolution an acknowledgment of the vital role that SNAP plays in the lives of families and their children, and your support for an increase in SNAP funding.

Further, while the increase in TEFAP funding included in the most recent version of the Farm Bill is greatly appreciated and properly recognized in the Council's Resolution, it remains insufficient to address the existing need for emergency food services. Last year alone, there was a \$173 million cut to TEFAP funding, for which the current \$160 million increase over a ten-year period does not compensate. We therefore urge the Council to include a call for a restoration of TEFAP funds, as an increasing number of children and families in New York City have been turning to emergency providers to access food.

Finally, we appreciate the Resolution's inclusion of support for programs that increase New Yorkers' abilities to purchase healthy foods in their own neighborhoods. In particular, the Resolution calls for more farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs to be equipped with Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) capabilities, and for the allocation of funding for food retailers in underserved communities through the Healthy Food Financing Initiative. The inclusion of these items in the Resolution represents the Council's acknowledgement that all New Yorkers want, and should be able, to buy nutritious food for their families in their own communities.

In sum, New York City families are facing ever-growing challenges in their attempts to feed their children the nutritious and affordable meals necessary for healthy growth and development. CCC is grateful for the Council's diligent work to increase all New Yorkers' access to healthy, affordable foods. We support the proposed Resolution, as it is a continuation of the Council's efforts to achieve this necessary goal.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Testimony prepared by
Colleen Second
for the Committee on Health

On
T2012-4774

Resolution calling on the United States House of
Representatives and the United States Senate to pass and for the
President to reauthorize an adequately funded Farm Bill that
creates a strong and healthy food system.

May 21st, 2012

10:00AM

INTRODUCTION

Good morning. My name is Colleen Second. I am a resident of Brownsville/Ocean Hill Community. I appreciate the opportunity to give testimony regarding the reauthorization of Resolution T2012-4774 by which the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate and President will reauthorize an adequately funded Farm Bill that creates a strong and healthy food system.

First, I want to acknowledge the continued commitment of the council, Chairperson Maria Del Carmen Arroyo and the Committee on Health, for holding this important and timely hearing and for ensuring that the residents of New York City are provided with a strong and healthy food system.

In my testimony today, I wish to highlight ways to ensure that the Farm Bill will create a strong and healthy food system.

Background

The Food Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246, "2008 farm bill") is the most recent omnibus farm bill. It was enacted into law on June 18, 2008 when it succeeded the 2002 farm bill that expired in September of 2007. The Farm Bill, which governs federal farm and food policy that covers a wide range of programs and provisions, is the primary tool for reducing hunger in the United States. The Bill is divided into 15 Titles that encompasses commodities, conservation, rural development, research, forestry, energy, horticulture, organic agriculture, livestock, and crop insurance, commodity futures, miscellaneous and trade and taxes.

The many barriers of unemployment, poverty, food insecurity or not knowing where to find one's next meal, are major obstacles to many New Yorkers quest to providing an adequate and safe supply of food to their households. From birth, proper nutrition is a necessity to growth since it directly affects the mental and physical health in young children in addition to their economic productivity and overall academic achievement.¹ However, as of March 2012 New York's State employment rates stands at 8.7% compared to 8.3% the previous year.² This has made it impossible for many households to access healthy food. Although, New York's 8 billion residents spend over \$30 billion on food each year the problem of hunger persists.³ In 2010, 32.6 million adults in the United States experienced food insecurity while some 16.2 million children under the age of 18 were deprived from access to nutrition.⁴ In 2009, the highest rates of food insecurity were found in the District of Columbia, Oregon, Arizona, Arkansas and Texas.⁵

Maintain and continue the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and current structure.

As such, a call to end hunger, food insecurity and poverty can be echoed in the Farm Bill by strengthening and maintaining Federal food and nutrition assistance programs. In 2008 55% of food-insecure households participated in one or more of the three largest Federal food and nutrition assistance programs.⁶ The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) more commonly known as Food Stamps touches the lives of millions of people who need help to put food on the table. For over 40 years, it has alleviated hunger and has improved nutrition by increasing the food purchasing power of low-income households, enabling them to obtain a more nutritious diet by preparing food at home.⁷

In 2010 and 2011, SNAP helped lift 3.9 million Americans, which includes 1.7 million children out of poverty and served nearly 45 million people or one in every seven Americans with food respectively.⁸ The ten states where SNAP made the largest percentage point difference in lifting households above 101 percent of the poverty level were New York (33.5), Vermont (26), Rhode Island (25.1), Massachusetts (23), Alaska (19.4), Wisconsin (17.8), Connecticut (17.5), New Hampshire (17.2), Maine (16.9), and Idaho (16.3).⁹ SNAP benefit levels are based on the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), a market basket of food updated annually by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) representing the minimum amount a family could spend on groceries for a

¹ <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/programs-and-services/public-assistance-programs/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.aspx>

² <http://labor.ny.gov/stats/pressreleases/prlaus.shtm>

³ Ibid

⁴ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ORA/menu/Published/SNAP/FILES/Other/BuildingHealthyAmerica.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ORA/menu/Published/SNAP/FILES/Other/BuildingHealthyAmerica.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ORA/menu/Published/SNAP/FILES/Other/BuildingHealthyAmerica.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ORA/menu/Published/SNAP/FILES/Other/BuildingHealthyAmerica.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ORA/menu/Published/SNAP/FILES/Other/BuildingHealthyAmerica.pdf>

⁹ Ibid

nutritionally adequate diet. The TFP is adjusted according to household size and income to determine benefit levels.¹⁰

In its current structure, SNAP is available to almost anyone with little or few resources who qualify. It has standard procedures for application filing, interviewing, and verification process of applicant information and processing. Its provision of benefits is extended to a wide range of low-income persons with the greatest number being children. For the fiscal year of 2012 eligibility requirements provides that households must have a monthly gross income of less than 130 percent of the Federal Poverty guidelines or \$2,422 for a family of four, or a monthly income of less than 100 percent of the poverty guidelines and assets of less than \$2,000.¹¹ Other exemptions include recipients of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), State General Assistance or Supplemental Security Income or a State option of Broad –based categorical eligibility for households that meet the non-financial criteria that include citizenship and work requirements.¹² Overall, the United States population has seen a dramatic rise in obesity rates over the last 20 years.¹³ In New York City the prevalence of obesity has increased from 20% to 22% with it highest rates being concentrated among people living in low-income neighborhoods.¹⁴ A prescription to increase access to healthy food is to increase funding to the “specialty crops” title, which covers fruits and vegetables, and by providing more money towards the support of small and medium size fruit and vegetable farmers instead of larger industries. As such more money should go towards supporting small and medium size fruit and vegetable farmers instead of only to the larger industries, Community Food Projects and Competitive grant Program and by maintaining funding for the Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program. In New York City SNAP, participants who receive SNAP benefits monthly through electronic debt (EBT) cards to purchase food items should be able to use their benefits to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables at farmers markets.¹⁵ This will increase access to healthy food, while assisting the livelihoods of regional farmers.

Increase funding to the WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) and the Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program (FMNP).

Funding should be increased to support the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women (WIC). For it promotes good health, nutritious foods, nutrition education, and referrals to health and other social services to pregnant women, new mothers and their infants and children up to 5

¹⁰ <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/programs-and-services/public-assistance-programs/supplemental-nutri>¹⁰
<http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/programs-and-services/public-assistance-programs/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.aspx>

¹¹ <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/programs-and-services/public-assistance-programs/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.aspx>

¹² <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/programs-and-services/public-assistance-programs/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.aspx>

¹³ http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/obesity/statistics_and_impact/

¹⁴ http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/obesity/statistics_and_impact/

¹⁵ <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ORa/menu/Published/SNAP/FILES/Other/BuildingHealthyAmerica.pdf>

years.¹⁶ Persons are eligible if their family income is below 185% the U.S. Poverty Income Guidelines or if they participate in other, benefit programs such the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.¹⁷ Additionally, more funding should be given to the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), which provides checks to the participants of the WIC Program to purchase locally grown fresh fruit and vegetables at farmers markets during the month of July to November.

Strengthen the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

When SNAP benefits run out people look towards emergency food programs for assistance. Findings of the 2010 Hunger in America (HIA) indicate that 5.7 million different people or in 1 in 50 Americans have received emergency food assistance from the Food Assistance system in any week.¹⁸ The Emergency food and Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a means tested program with income and eligibility requirements by states is designed to meet the short-term, emergency food needs of low-income Americans.¹⁹ Its recipients include vulnerable populations of children, adults and the elderly. It is managed by State Agencies who in turn distribute the products or commodities to qualifying Emergency Food Programs or EFO's which includes churches, food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens and Community Action Agencies for direct distribution to the needy or use it to prepare meals for service.²⁰ "TEFAP commodity purchases are authorized through 2007 by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (Public Law 107-171) at \$140 million in mandatory food purchase funding through the Food Stamp Act, and \$60 million in discretionary authorization for TEFAP storage, distribution, and handling costs."²¹ TEFAP serves the dual purpose of providing wholesome food to hungry people and serving the agricultural community by using surplus commodities purchased by USDA from farmers and other producers.²² Findings show that for every \$1 USDA spends for TEFAP commodities, farmers and producers receive between 27 and 85 cents, one of the highest rates of farm return of any federal nutrition program.²³ As the demand for food increases at food distribution sites the need for TEFAP increases.

¹⁶ <http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/wic/>

¹⁷ <http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/wic/>

¹⁸ <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/programs-and-services/public-assistance-programs/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.aspx>

¹⁹ <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/programs-and-services/public-assistance-programs/emergency-food-assistance-program.aspx>

²⁰ <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/programs-and-services/public-assistance-programs/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.aspx>

²¹ <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/programs-and-services/public-assistance-programs/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.aspx>

²² <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/programs-and-services/public-assistance-programs/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.aspx>

²³ <http://feedingamerica.org/how-we-fight-hunger/programs-and-services/public-assistance-programs/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.aspx>

Promoting research of Organic and Non-genetically engineered food

In its original form the Research Title was geared towards providing practical solutions to the day-to-day problems experienced by farmers. However, in recent years federal dollars has been channeled in the form of grants to promote research to large universities and major institutions towards industrial farming.²⁴ This trend should be reversed and the focus should now be towards the benefit of small-scale farmers instead of agribusiness towards producing non-genetically engineered crops and livestock breeds.²⁵ Moreover research should be geared towards a safe and healthy food supply that would encourage farming practices that are environmentally safe.

SUMMARY

The opportunity to create a strong and healthy food system has presented itself through the reauthorization of the Farm Bill. Therefore, the next farm bill needs to make healthy food accessible, by strengthening the safety net by allocating more funding to SNAP, TEFAP and other federal programs that promote healthy eating and to ensure that low income earners can afford or are provided with an option to safe, healthy food. Moreover, small-farmer research and the growing of organic food should be promoted while at the same time conserving the environment.

²⁴ <http://documents.foodandwaterwatch.org/doc/FarmBill101Report.pdf>

²⁴ <http://documents.foodandwaterwatch.org/doc/FarmBill101Report.pdf>



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Testimony prepared by

Triada Stampas

for the

Committee on Health

on a

Preconsidered Resolution to reauthorize an adequately funded Farm Bill that creates a strong and healthy food system.

May 21, 2012

on behalf of

Food Bank For New York City

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon and thank you, Chairperson Arroyo and members of the Health Committee. My name is Triada Stampas and I am the Senior Director of Government Relations at the Food Bank For New York City. The Food Bank appreciates the opportunity to present testimony today to the City Council in support of this Resolution, which calls for the reauthorization of an adequately funded Farm Bill that creates a strong and healthy food system.

First, the Food Bank thanks the City Council for your attentiveness and advocacy in the face of threats to federal nutrition assistance programs in Congress over the past year. In particular, we are grateful for the message you sent to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (known as the "Super-committee") during the deficit reduction process urging that these programs, particularly the Food Stamp Program (known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP), not fall victim to cuts or restructuring.

In addition, the Food Bank thanks the City Council for your ongoing efforts to address the issue of hunger and ensure all New Yorkers have access to affordable, nutritious food. The City Council's consistent support for increasing enrollment of eligible households in the Food Stamp Program and expanding the in-classroom School Breakfast Program, as well as funding to expand the supply of food available at emergency food programs are especially appreciated and needed as the recession has left elevated levels of food poverty in its wake.

We are fortunate to be holding this hearing just days after Governor Cuomo has announced an end to finger imaging for SNAP, and we thank you as well for your leadership and years of advocacy that helped bring about the elimination of this barrier to access.

Food Bank For New York City works to end hunger and food poverty by increasing access to nutrition, education and financial empowerment. Approximately 1.5 million New York City residents rely on our programs and services. We distribute food and provide support services to approximately 1,000 emergency and community food programs citywide; manage nutrition education programs for schools and community-based organizations (CBOs); operate income support programs including food stamp outreach & enrollment assistance and one of the largest Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) programs in the country; and conduct research to inform community and government efforts to end hunger in New York City.

With indicators of need in New York – including poverty, food insecurity and unemployment – remaining entrenched at high levels since the start of the recession, the Congressional reauthorization of the Farm Bill this year takes on added importance, as it will set policy and funding for the safety net of federal nutrition assistance programs for the next five years. **The decisions made in Washington, DC this year will directly impact the ability of low-income New Yorkers to feed themselves and their families for years to come.**

With policy, program and funding implications that will be deeply felt in urban areas like New York City, the term “Farm Bill” can be misleading. My testimony will focus on the federal nutrition assistance programs in Title IV of the Farm Bill, the Nutrition Title. As you will undoubtedly hear today, these are by no means the only programs of interest to New Yorkers; they are, however, the ones that will have the most significant and widespread impact.

THE FARM BILL UNDERPINS OUR COUNTRY’S HUNGER SAFETY NET

The Farm Bill represents our nation’s most significant investment to prevent hunger. Title IV, the Nutrition Title, constitutes more than 70 percent of the spending in the Farm Bill and includes two key programs: SNAP and the federal Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

Food stamps are our nation’s first line of defense against hunger. A federal entitlement program, SNAP now provides food assistance to 46.3 million, or one in seven, Americans.¹ Available to any household that meets the eligibility criteria (most importantly, income and immigration status), SNAP is *countercyclical*, meaning when the economy shrinks, it has the flexibility to grow to meet rising need. SNAP enrollment in New York City first exceeded 1.8

¹ United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). February 2012.

million residents – approximately one in five – in December 2010 and has not dropped below that threshold since, evidence that recession has left elevated need in its wake.²

SNAP is highly targeted to reach people in need. A large majority, 85 percent, of SNAP households have income below the poverty level. One in five have no cash income whatsoever; for them, food stamp benefits are their *only* resource to purchase food. Nearly half of SNAP recipients (47 percent) are children.³

SNAP provides timely, and in most cases, temporary assistance. SNAP benefits quickly reach people in their time of need – in most cases, within 45 days of application, though in emergency cases, benefits are delivered within a week – and the average length of time households receive benefits is only nine months.⁴

Emergency food is our last line of defense against hunger. When cash, benefits and the generosity of family and friends have been exhausted, the emergency food network of food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters is the resource of last resort for those struggling to put food on the table. Approximately 37 million Americans rely on emergency food at some point over the course of the year.⁵

In New York City, 1.4 million residents rely on the network of nearly 1,000 food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters across the five boroughs that provide emergency food to neighbors in need. TEFAP is the single largest source of emergency food, accounting for approximately half the food distributed by the Food Bank For New York City in recent years. TEFAP is made up of two funding components: mandatory baseline funding set by the Farm Bill; and discretionary funding used by the United States Department of Agriculture to purchase food from farmers when agricultural markets are weak in order to stabilize prices. Over recent years, the discretionary component of TEFAP has roughly equaled (and, in some years, exceeded) the baseline funding.

As a result of strong agricultural markets in the past year, however, the USDA has not exercised its administrative authority to purchase food. TEFAP consequently lost \$173 million last year, and losses continue. **In New York City, food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters have lost nearly 10 million meals this year alone as a result of these cuts.**

If the first line of defense is weakened, the last line will not hold. New York City's emergency food network is already struggling to meet heightened levels of need that have persisted past the end of the recession.⁶ More than 50 agencies have closed their doors over the past year; many of those that remain open report insufficient food and other resources at a time of unprecedented need. While the Farm Bill presents a window of opportunity for improvements to SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs, it also exposes a moment of vulnerability to threats of funding cuts, caps and restructuring. *Any* cuts to SNAP will deprive low-income individuals and families of much-needed food assistance and force more vulnerable New Yorkers into an emergency food network ill-equipped and under-resourced to meet additional need.

² New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA). March 2012.

³ USDA. Characteristics of SNAP Households: Fiscal Year 2010. September 2011.

⁴ USDA, Food and Nutrition Service. *Fact Sheet*. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/FactSheets/SNAP.htm>.

⁵ Feeding America.

⁶ By economists' definitions, the recession, which began in December 2007, ended in June 2009.

With SNAP cuts already featuring prominently in the ongoing Farm Bill negotiations, the City Council will be sending Congress an important message at an opportune time by passing this Resolution as quickly as possible.

CURRENT THREATS TO ANTI-HUNGER FUNDING IN CONGRESS

The Farm Bill is drafted by the Agriculture Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Once committee members in each house vote to pass their bill, it proceeds to the floor of the respective house of Congress, where it comes to a vote before the full body. Before votes in committee and on the floor, members have the opportunity to offer amendments to the bill. As with any federal legislation, any differences between the Senate and House versions of the Farm Bill will be reconciled in a Conference Committee made up of members of both houses.

At this moment, the Senate Agriculture Committee has passed its draft of the Farm Bill, while the House Agriculture Committee is still completing hearings and collecting public comment. Both bodies, however, have offered damaging proposals that would cut SNAP benefits deeply for some or all recipients.

IN THE SENATE

The Senate Agriculture Committee Farm Bill draft (called a “mark”) contains a \$4.49 billion cut to SNAP benefits over ten years. This cut would impact residents of federally subsidized housing in 14 states, including New York. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the loss to affected households would be, on average, \$90 per month in benefits.

In New York City, 190,000 households would experience a decrease in SNAP benefits as a result of this cut.⁷ They are residents of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) housing developments – where the average household income is approximately \$23,000⁸ – or recipients of federal Section 8 vouchers. The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance estimates conservatively that the loss of federal benefits across the state would be at least \$150 million per year.

This loss would not only harm vulnerable New Yorkers, it would have a broader economic impact as the buying power for food in many communities would be significantly decreased. It is estimated that every billion dollars cut from SNAP benefits results in the loss of more than 13,000 jobs.⁹

Helpfully, the Senate Agriculture Committee Farm Bill Mark includes an increase in TEFAP baseline spending of \$160 million over the next ten years, and clarifies the USDA’s discretionary authority to purchase food in response to high unemployment. These funding increases and policy changes are much needed improvements to the program. It should be noted, however, that any beneficial impact will likely be lost if these changes are paired with the deep cuts to SNAP benefits proposed.

⁷ According to analysis by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. Across New York State, approximately 275,000 households would be affected.

⁸ NYCHA Facts.

⁹ Center for American Progress.

The Senate Agriculture Committee's draft of the Farm Bill awaits debate on the floor of the Senate.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

While the Agriculture Committee of the House of Representatives has yet to produce its Farm Bill draft, there have been disturbing indications that the Committee is willing to entertain even deeper cuts than those contained in the Senate draft. As part of the House Budget Resolution, a majority of House members voted to eliminate SNAP's entitlement status and cut benefits by a shocking \$133 billion over the next ten years. In addition, as part of the framework created by the Budget Resolution to avoid cuts to security and defense spending, the House Agriculture Committee – the same Committee with responsibility for the Farm Bill – adopted a plan to reduce SNAP benefits by an additional \$36 billion. The full House also approved this plan. The cuts proposed in **the House would reduce benefits for every SNAP recipient in the country and remove some from the program entirely.**

SUMMARY

While the Farm Bill process has thus far seen distressing proposals to strip vulnerable individuals and families of the food assistance they rely on, it is far from over. The Food Bank applauds the City Council for its advocacy today to protect and strengthen SNAP and the rest of the hunger safety net. The Resolution under consideration will provide support to the work of champions in Congress like New York's Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, who are working tirelessly to fight SNAP cuts and make the most of available opportunities to improve and strengthen anti-hunger programs. Senator Gillibrand, who sits on the Senate Agriculture Committee, spoke forcefully against SNAP cuts before the Committee, and was instrumental in securing inclusion of the amendment that, if passed in the final Farm Bill, will increase the amount of food in TEFAP, particularly in times of need.

Food Bank For New York City strongly supports passage of this Resolution and thanks the Health Committee and the entire City Council for the time and attention it is giving to this critical issue.

Statement of the Natural Resources Defense Council
Before the New York City Council Committee on Health
Re: Preconsidered Resolution XX

May 21, 2012

Good Morning. My name is Margaret Brown and I am a legal fellow at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), which has worked for over four decades on environmental and public health issues in the New York region. NRDC has also worked for many years at the national and regional levels on food and agriculture issues. NRDC is now engaged in a multi-year project dedicated to increasing the amount of sustainable food produced and consumed in the greater New York metropolitan region. As the Council knows, providing more local and sustainable food to all New Yorkers can improve public health, grow our economy, and protect the environment.

In short, we strongly support the Resolution before the Committee and applaud the Council for raising important pending federal issues that directly impact our food system. Of course, this is not the first time the City Council has shown leadership on regional food issues. Last year, the Council passed the NYC Food Metrics Bill, -- which NRDC testified in support of --, as an important first step in better understanding how to improve the City's food system. And this Resolution only further contributes to the Council's leadership on this critical issue.

The continued and adequate funding of nutrition title in the 2012 Farm Bill is critical for New Yorkers and anti-hunger advocates have been outstanding in championing that cause. While NRDC fully supports these efforts, our brief statement today focuses on three other parts of the Resolution that are essential to the health and wellbeing of all New Yorkers.

First, we support the Council's Resolution in calling for the inclusion and funding in the 2012 Farm Bill of the Farmer's Market Promotion Program, Value-Added Producer Grants, and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. These programs provide the education, training and financial support that regional, new and / or transitioning farmers need to succeed. Though these programs are not very costly, they are invaluable in their benefit to both farmers and consumers. The success of our farmers is imperative for building a strong and healthy food system.

Second, we commend the Council for recognizing in the Resolution the importance of preserving our rural landscapes and the natural resource base, which surround and support our city. A well-funded conservation title is essential to protecting our environment. Promoting sustainable agriculture programs and funding conservation measures can encourage the type of farming that builds soil health, prevents erosion, and protects our water from excessive nutrients or pesticides. This is critical throughout the state, and the country for that matter, but particularly in the unfiltered New York watershed of the Catskill-Delaware region where ill-considered development projects and the potential impacts of gas drilling continue to threaten our irreplaceable water supply.

Third, we applaud the City Council's Resolution for its support of the modernization of 45-year-old Hunts Point Produce Market, which serves as the main distribution point for 60% of the city's fruit and vegetables and 22 million people in the region. However, we respectfully recommend a small modification to the language in the Resolution to ensure that any federally allocated monies for redevelopment should also support a wholesale farmers' market in Hunts Point. Despite being the largest wholesale market in the country, only a small portion of the food coming through Hunts Point is regional. Giving small and mid-size regional farmers better market access is key to ensuring their economic success, protecting our environment, and providing New Yorkers with fresh, healthy food. Governor Cuomo called for the development of a Hunts Point wholesale farmers' market in his 2011 State of the State. And just this month the *New York Times* Editorial Board came out in support of this project. This small change in the language of the Resolution would further highlight the importance of including a wholesale farmers' market in the revitalization of Hunts Point.

In closing, we would like to thank the City Council for recognizing the deep and important connection between New York City and the rural areas that produce our food. A 2012 Farm Bill that adequately funds nutrition, conservation and producer support programs is essential for a healthy New York.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The FOOD and FARM BILL: Why New York City Cares

The Food and Farm Bill is the single greatest influence on what we eat. It determines how billions are spent shaping our food system, from producer to consumer. We, in New York City (NYC), have an enormous stake in the Food and Farm Bill. Eight million of us spend \$30 billion annually on food.ⁱ

Yet, hunger persists in NYC. An all-time high of 1.84 million NYC residents rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as Food Stamps, and 1.4 million of us rely on emergency food.ⁱⁱ One in six of us, including more than 400,000 of our children live in households facing food insecurity.ⁱⁱⁱ Many of us find unhealthy food far more accessible than healthy food. The nutrition safety net does not meet the needs of our hungry neighbors.

Past Food and Farm Bills inadequately promote healthy food choices, like fruits and vegetables. America needs 13 million more acres in fruit and vegetable production for each of us to meet USDA healthful dietary guidelines.^{iv} Yet, the Food and Farm Bill provides incentives for the production of processed foods that are high in added sugars (from federally subsidized corn) and added fats (from federally subsidized soy). The least healthful calories in the supermarket are the cheapest, in part, because of federal financing.

Past bills perpetuate the paradox of chronic hunger and widespread overweight and obesity. Overweight and obesity are significant risk factors for adult diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic conditions. Nearly 40 percent of elementary and middle school students,^v 28 percent of high school students,^{vi} and 67 percent of our adults are overweight or obese.^{vii} In New York State, \$6.1 billion is spent annually fighting diet-related diseases.^{viii}

Food is also connected to the health of our environment and our economy. Our current food system is unsustainable. It accounts for about 20 percent of our national energy consumption and relies heavily on inputs including chemicals, fossil fuels, and a staggering amount of water.^{ix} Unchecked, such practices can degrade our natural resources, eroding our soil and polluting our air and water.

While we are dependent on national and international food production, the relationship between NYC and our regional food shed, particularly in New York State, is significant. New York State is home to more than 36,000 farms - most of which are small, family farms ranging from one to 99-acres - that generate \$5 billion in annual revenue.^x However, this valuable resource is threatened as we lose farmland to development, especially near cities, and it is difficult to find new farmers to replace retiring farmers.

A relatively small number of corporations increasingly control food production, availability, and cost. Unsound public policies have resulted in corporate consolidation of the food chain, making it increasingly difficult for small and mid-sized farms to continue operation.

The FOOD and FARM BILL: Why New York City Cares

Our federal policies put national food sovereignty at risk: we are losing farmland and our farmers are fewer and older; our system of production and distribution is unsustainable; our fruits and vegetables are grown on land in danger of development; and we import almost as many agricultural products as we export, all this while our population is growing. Not only is our own food sovereignty at risk, our policies risk the food sovereignty of other nations. Around the world, particularly in the global south, family farmers and local food self-sufficiency are disappearing, in part, because of their inability to compete with our subsidized commodity crops.

With the 2012 Food and Farm Bill, there is an opportunity to re-evaluate our farm and food policies, maintaining the most beneficial and, when it makes good sense, changing others. As a matter of social justice and our core values, a decided majority of Americans believe that we must provide an equitable food safety net.^{xi} Despite this, our food safety net is unraveling. While we consider the role of our federal government, including its relationship to our farms and our food, we must determine what in the Food and Farm Bill can best serve the common good.

To these ends, the New York City Food and Farm Bill Working Group has developed five Principles that we hold must be embodied in our nation's next Food and Farm Bill: A Health-Focused Food System; An End to Hunger and Access to Healthy Food; A Level "Plowing" Field; Good Environmental Stewardship; and Vibrant Regional Farm and Food Economies.

ⁱ Chittenden, Jessica. "Survey Says Wholesale Market Good for Farmers, Consumers." Department of Agriculture & Markets News. Feb. 9. 2005. <<http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AD/release.asp?ReleaseID=1403>>

ⁱⁱ New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. "Temporary and Disability Assistance Statistic. Table 16. July 2011. <<http://otda.ny.gov/resources/caseload/2011/2011-07-stats.pdf>>

ⁱⁱⁱ New York City Coalition Against Hunger. "NYC Hunger Catastrophe Avoided (For Now)." November 2009. <http://www.nyccah.org/files/AnnualHungerSurveyReport_Nov09.pdf>

^{iv} American Farmland Trust. "American Farmland Trust Says—The United States Needs 13 Million More Acres of Fruits and Vegetables to Meet the RDA". 2010. <<http://www.farmland.org/news/pressreleases/13-Million-More-Acres.asp>>

^v NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. "NYC Vital Signs: Childhood is a Serious Concern in New York City." June 2009. <<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/survey/survey-2009fitnessgram.pdf>>

^{vi} NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. "2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results." <<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/survey/yrbs09-trendreport.pdf>>

^{vii} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Overweight and Obesity/New York. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/fundedstates/new_york.html>

^{viii} New York State Department of Health. "Prevention of Childhood Overweight and Obesity - Activ8Kids!". Request for Applications Number 0601261256:4. 2006. <<http://www.health.state.ny.us/funding/rfa/0601261256/0601261256.pdf>>

^{ix} Center for Sustainable Systems: University of Michigan. "Life Cycle-Based Sustainability Indicators for Assessment of the U.S. Food System". Report No. CSS00-04. December 2006 <http://css.snre.umich.edu/css_doc/CSS00-04.pdf>

^x United States Department of Agriculture. Agriculture in the Classroom, "A Look at New York Agriculture". July 2010 <<http://www.agclassroom.org/kids/stats/newyork.pdf>>

^{xi} Food Research and Action Center. "FRAC Releases New Polling Data Showing Overwhelming Support for Federal Efforts to End Hunger." Press Release. December 2010. <<http://frac.org/2010/12/frac-releases-new-polling-data-showing-overwhelming-support-for-federal-efforts-to-end-hunger/>>

New York City FOOD and FARM BILL Principles

1 A Health-Focused Food System

Obesity and diet-related diseases have reached epidemic proportions. A food system that focuses on increasing the production and distribution of healthy foods - including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains - for consumption in our communities, homes, schools, and institutions will support the health and well being of us all.

2 An End to Hunger and Access to Healthy Food

While hunger is a large and growing problem in our communities, our food system also contributes to a national obesity epidemic. In accord with our core American values and our principles of social justice, we must provide food security for all, including our most vulnerable, the disadvantaged, the young, and the aged. Ending food insecurity and hunger by protecting our nation's nutrition programs and ensuring equitable access to healthful, sustainably produced food is of paramount importance. Also of great importance are consumers' abilities to make informed, healthy food choices and to access healthy food.

3 A Level "Plowing" Field

The face of farming in our nation is changing. Small- and mid-scale family farms are increasingly struggling against anti-competitive practices, industry consolidation, and subsidies that tilt the playing field. Meanwhile, extensive outbreaks of food-borne illnesses are becoming increasingly common. While the productive capacity of large-scale agriculture is considerable, so is its capacity to negatively impact our health, our environment, and the diversity and competitiveness of agricultural enterprise. Conservation, risk management, access to credit, and food safety programs often are calibrated to the scales of "production" agriculture. Restoring competition, promoting fairness, encouraging decentralization, and developing scale-appropriate programs will contribute to the future vitality of small- and mid-scale regional, rural, and urban farm and food enterprises.

4 Good Environmental Stewardship

Our present agricultural system, which relies heavily on chemicals, fossil fuels, and a staggering amount of water, is damaging our environment and our ability to feed ourselves in the future. Conservation priorities must align with our best interests. To ensure a secure food system today and well into the future, we must preserve our vital agricultural soil and water resources, reduce farm and other food-system energy consumption, and practice sustainable agricultural production methods that minimize air and water pollution.

5 Vibrant Regional Farm and Food Economies

High unemployment and a sluggish economy compound challenges facing those who labor in the food system, including small- and mid-scale farmers. Opportunities that create fair wage jobs are key to a strong economy. We must look to innovative methods to strengthen our regional food systems as a means to regain economic vitality. We must provide entrepreneurial opportunities and foster business growth and job creation in rural and urban production, processing, and distribution. Farm and food strategies must support beginning and disadvantaged urban and rural farmers, as well as established farmers facing the challenges of feeding America. By doing so, we will increase the amount of regionally produced, healthy food that is available in our communities while we strengthen our economy.

FARM BILL

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: COLLEEN SECONA

Address: 524 CHESTER ST. BROOKLYN NY, 11212

I represent: MYSELF

Address: _____

ORGAN

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Date: 5/21/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: TED LAWSON

Address: 140 EAST 72 STREET - NYC - 10021

I represent: SAVE LIVES NOW NEW YORK FOUNDATION

Address: 666 FIFTH AVENUE - 16 FLOOR - NYC 10103

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Name: JAMES PARDES

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I represent: NEW YORK ORGAN DONOR NETWORK

Address: 460 W 34th

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ~~1196~~ Res. No. 1196

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Name: Sara Jacobs

Address: _____

I represent: Assemblyman Felix W. Ortiz

Address: 404 55th St. Brooklyn 11220

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Name: Lauren Shields

Address: 12 Bullowa Drive, Stony Pt NY

I represent: NYODN 10950

Address: _____

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Farm
Bill

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Giana Mickie

Address: mickiegiana@gmail.com

I represent: NYC Food & Farm Bill Working Group

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

FARM Bill

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/21/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SANDRA JEAN-LOUIS

Address: Sagan-Louis @ health solutions, inc

I represent: PUBLIC HEALTH SOLUTIONS

Address: 40 WASH ST 5th floor

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Farm Bill

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in favor in opposition

Date: 5/21/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Triada Stampas

Address: _____

I represent: Food Bank For NYC

Address: 39 Broadway, 10th Fl, NYC 10006

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Farm Bill

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/21/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Margaret Brown

Address: 64 Bergen St, Apt 3 Brooklyn

I represent: NRDC

Address: 40 W. 20th St. Apt 11th Fl NY

NY 10011

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. Farm Bill
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joel Berg

Address: 1 Plaza St. Brooklyn, NY

I represent: NYC Coalition Against Hunger

Address: 50 Blvd, NY, NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

Farm Bill
I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Preconsidered Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 5/20/12

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Louise Feld

Address: _____

I represent: Citizens' Committee for Children

Address: _____

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