

TESTIMONY

TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

GENERAL WELFARE COMMITTEE

HEARING ON HUNGER IN NEW YORK

BY STEVEN BANKS

COMMISSIONER

NEW YORK CITY HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION

NOVEMBER 24, 2014

My name is Steven Banks and I am Commissioner of the New York City Human Resources Administration.

I would like to thank the City Council's General Welfare Committee and Chair Stephen Levin for giving me this opportunity to testify today about HRA's efforts to address hunger in New York City.

Hunger is clearly a serious problem in New York City. Nationally, an estimated 14.3% of households were food insecure at least some time during the year in 2013. In New York City, according to an analysis produced by Feeding America, 1.4 million New Yorkers, 17.4%, were food insecure at least some time during the year in 2012.

Households are food insecure when their access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources. Food insecurity is a consequence of unemployment and low-wage jobs. Hunger is a consequence of food insecurity. In sum, food insecurity is one of the consequences of growing inequality.

The de Blasio Administration is addressing this issue in two main ways. First, there is the ongoing effort to fight inequality by, for example, raising the minimum wage and improving job training programs to provide the skills for living wage jobs. Second, in the eight months since I became the Commissioner, we have instituted a number of reforms to streamline access to enroll and re-enroll in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, formerly known as food stamps. We have also begun new outreach efforts to sign up New Yorkers who qualify for SNAP but are not receiving assistance and we are developing additional outreach programs.

One of the key benefit programs that HRA administers is the federal SNAP program. Nearly 1.7 million New Yorkers currently receive federal SNAP benefits from HRA. Only about 350,000 of them are on public assistance. Many of the rest are working in jobs which pay an amount low enough so that they qualify for federal food assistance.

Overall, for almost one in four New Yorkers, federal SNAP benefits play an important role in providing the food they need for themselves and their families.

For New Yorkers struggling to survive in low-income jobs, government benefits such as SNAP aid help them keep those jobs and stay in the workforce and try to build a better future.

After growing for many years, beginning in 2013, the number of people receiving SNAP assistance in New York City has been slowly declining. National usage has also been declining over the same period.

There are two factors that are associated with this national and local decline. First is the improvement in the economy, which has resulted in some people's income increasing enough so that they no longer meet the federal requirements to qualify for SNAP. Further analysis of the New York City numbers also shows that there has been no decline in the number of people receiving both public assistance and SNAP. The decline has been among those only receiving SNAP benefits, many of whom are working. This data indicates that their income may have increased so they no longer qualify for federal food assistance under the United States Department of Agriculture's rules implementing the federal statute.

The second factor causing a national and local decline in SNAP assistance is Congress's decision to cut the amount of SNAP benefits for the federal fiscal year that started on October 1, 2014. Therefore, some people may have concluded that it is no longer worth it to obtain and retain the substantially reduced benefit level, which declines as income rises.

Moreover, federal SNAP benefits alone do not solve the problem of hunger, even for those who receive them. For example, the level of SNAP benefits does not reflect increased food costs and other living costs in New York City. We hear from many clients that they run out of SNAP benefits before the end of the month.

While we must abide by the limitations of federal law, HRA can and is taking steps to help as many New Yorkers as possible who qualify for this benefit actually receive it. We are eliminating bureaucratic barriers so that eligible New Yorkers can apply for and obtain SNAP benefits. And we have implemented several outreach programs to reach those who qualify but are not receiving benefits. Here are some highlights of what we have been doing to address hunger in our City.

Continuing Outreach Efforts

Outreach is a crucial part of the day-to-day work at HRA. HRA's Office of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Outreach Services educates the general public about SNAP eligibility guidelines and assists with the application process. In Fiscal Year 2014, this unit provided outreach services at more than 1,543 individual community events.

Because we understand that immigrants with legal status are one of the largest groups of New Yorkers who qualify for but do not receive SNAP benefits, we have increased services to immigrants and non-English speaking New Yorkers by partnering with 53 community-based organizations that primarily serve these groups. In addition, the unit manages three community-based "Paperless Office System" sites to provide on-line access to benefits and monitors the activity at 79 community-based organizations that provide SNAP facilitated enrollment and recertification services. Over the past year, the Office of SNAP Outreach Services prescreened more than 11,300 potentially eligible applicants.

In an attempt to further assist those New Yorkers who seek help through the emergency food network, this unit works with all HRA-funded community kitchens and food pantries to make sure that they are engaged in and providing some type of SNAP outreach services.

Senior Citizen Outreach

In September 2014, HRA started working with the Robin Hood Foundation, the Benefits Data Trust (BDT) and the New York City Department for the Aging to send letters followed by robo-calls and reminder postcards to about 100,000 seniors, 60 and over, whom we have identified as receiving other benefits, such as Medicaid, but not SNAP.

Nationally, more than 60% of eligible seniors do not receive SNAP. In New York, there is a 50% participation rate for eligible low-income seniors. This is due to many barriers, including mobility, lack of knowledge, and supposed stigma of accepting government assistance.

In order to follow up on HRA's mailings and robo calls to the 100,000 seniors, in partnership with HRA and funded by Robin Hood, the New York Benefits Center is employing BDT's proven model of targeted outreach and application assistance. Using enrollment data for the five boroughs and working with HRA to complement our outreach, the New York Benefits Center has implemented a phone and direct mail campaign for these seniors who are not receiving SNAP. As seniors respond to the targeted outreach, highly-trained contact center staff provides seniors with comprehensive SNAP application assistance, including document support and extensive follow-up.

The goals of the program are as follows:

- Outreach to 85,000 to 100,000 seniors
- Submit 8,000 to 10,000 applications
- Enroll 7,000 to 9,000 seniors

Since the start of the program in September 2014, working with HRA, BDT has:

- Mailed 23,800 outreach letters
- Conducted robo-calls recorded by the Commissioner to 15,542 households in conjunction with the mailing
- Screened 4,385 households for SNAP over the phone
- Began SNAP applications for 2,049 households, or 46.7% of all households screened
- Submitted 1,683 applications on ACCESS NYC
 - 589 of these applications were for senior Bronx residents
 - 1,094 of these applications were for senior Queens residents

NYCHA

HRA and the New York City Housing Authority are working together to develop a computer match to identify NYCHA residents who do not receive food stamps and are likely to qualify for them, and then contact them and offer help in enrolling in the program.

SNAP Campaign

In conjunction with the roll out of the updated AccessNYC website next year, HRA will conduct a broad campaign to reach those eligible for SNAP but not receiving these benefits and let them know that they can enroll and re-enroll online and through community-based organizations around the City. This broad campaign will focus on both seniors and immigrants, the two main groups with significant numbers of New Yorkers identified as likely to be qualified but not receiving benefits. We welcome the help of community organizations, Council Members and other elected officials in this campaign.

PROCESS CHANGES THAT MAKE ENROLLING AND STAYING ON SNAP EASIER

As I noted earlier, in the last few months, HRA has instituted a range of reforms that make it easier to apply and re-enroll in SNAP benefits.

One of the problems we have had in the past was that too often clients would submit documents and the documents would not be included in our records. This created frustration for both clients and staff and could delay receiving benefits. We are addressing this problem in a number of ways.

Five SNAP HRA Centers and 10 community-based organization partners have self-service areas in which applicants or clients can provide required documents electronically through self-service scanners that automatically associate the documents with the appropriate case information. This can be done not only when initially applying, but also to report case changes such as the addition or removal of a family member, change in rent, or address change. Through this initiative, a confirmation receipt is mailed to clients, so they have verification that they have submitted the documents. Additional SNAP Centers will be implementing this technology.

HRA has also instituted "Right FAX" which allows clients to fax their required documents directly into the HRA case viewer. In addition, HRA has provided the Center's FAX numbers on the HRA form (W113K) that highlights the required documents needed to establish SNAP eligibility. This process has reduced the need for clients to have to go to the Centers.

Since 2010 applicants have been able to apply for SNAP benefits on line at www.nyc.gov/accessnyc. During 2015, we are implementing a new system to make it possible to recertify on line.

In addition, 13 of the 16 HRA SNAP Centers have PC banks, a group of publicly available personal computers, from which applicants can submit on-line applications with on-site assistance from HRA staff. Two additional centers are scheduled to roll out PC Banks before the end of 2014.

We also want to ensure that eligible clients do not miss appointments and thereby lose benefits. So as part of our reform efforts this year we instituted robo calls, that is, automated calls which are made to applicants and clients with scheduled telephone interviews to remind them of their upcoming appointments, including the date and time of the appointment. If the appointment is missed, another automated call is made to the applicant or client providing information on how to reschedule their appointment. And SNAP has an entire unit of staff dedicated to rescheduling missed appointments.

Client Service Supervisors have also been placed in 14 HRA SNAP Centers (as well as in various Job Centers) to assist clients with accessing services on-site. These supervisors are placed at the Center's entry point for clients so they can identify those in need of assistance and help them navigate the process with special attention paid to needs such as language access and Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

And these process improvements this year are only the beginning. During 2015, HRA plans to provide on-demand SNAP interviews, allowing clients to call at their convenience. Eventually we expect that certain functions will be available with a smart phone, such as document upload. By the beginning of 2015, multiple SNAP forms will be consolidated into one streamlined form which will be easier for clients to understand and respond to. We have also filed two waiver requests with the State to improve

the processing of SNAP cases and to provide a more efficient and effective means for clients to document certain expenses.

Furthermore, we have also made an important policy change to increase access to federal food assistance. In May of this year, HRA accepted the federal Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD) waiver, which allows single adults who are unemployed or underemployed to receive food stamps when they cannot find more than 20 hours of work per week. This waiver had already been accepted by 43 of the 50 states and by all other New York counties. In addition to providing federal assistance to address hunger, this policy change provides an economic benefit when this federal assistance is spent in the neighborhoods of our City. The United States Department of Agriculture has found that every dollar of SNAP benefits produces \$1.80 in local economic activity.

Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP)

The City also supports food pantries and soup kitchens through HRA. The HRA Emergency Food Assistance Program's (EFAP) baseline funding for food in Fiscal Year 2015 is \$9.7 million. That now includes in the baseline funds which in the past had to be added by the Council. For this year, the Council added an additional \$250,000.

EFAP has also made significant efforts to improve the nutritional standards of all foods that are provided to the emergency food network. Since 2008, EFAP has required that all foods purchased with City funding meet sodium, sugar and trans-fat standards that aim to reduce the prevalence of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. In addition, HRA requires that all emergency food programs funded by EFAP receive SNAP outreach services. These services include SNAP eligibility prescreening, assistance with the SNAP application process; and guidance on making healthy food choices.

During the last fiscal year, EFAP distributed 12 million pounds of food.

Finally, HRA is currently working with a sub-group of the Reducing Hunger Service Initiative to create and conduct a survey of the skill-based volunteer needs of the emergency food network. The survey is targeting individual emergency food programs, such as soup kitchens and food pantries. It will assess volunteer needs and program interest in having a skill-based volunteer at the site. The results will be used to recruit volunteers with the needed skills through NYC Service and assign them appropriately.

Conclusion

There is no question that the SNAP program and the emergency food assistance program have and will continue to provide essential help to New Yorkers. It is clear that without SNAP the problem of hunger in the City would be much worse. That said, these programs have not eliminated the problem of hunger. More remains to be done.

The long-term solutions are clear. When New Yorkers can earn a living wage and find affordable housing, they will have the ability to obtain the food they need to prevent hunger.

So while we work as hard as we can to make the current programs as effective as possible, we can never lose sight of the bigger goals needed to fundamentally address hunger – which is why in fighting poverty and income inequality this Administration is implementing a comprehensive affordable housing plan and initiatives to create more living wage jobs.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. We look forward to continuing to work with this Committee and the Council as a whole to address these important issues. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.



**Testimony of Joel Berg, Executive Director
New York City Coalition Against Hunger**

Before The New York City Council General Welfare Committee

on Hunger in New York City

November 24, 2014

I am Joel Berg, Executive Director, at the New York City Coalition Against Hunger. I am testifying on behalf of the city's more than 1,100 soup kitchens and food pantries – and the more than 1.4 million New Yorkers who live in households that can't afford enough food. I want to first thank Chairman Levin for his work on behalf of people in need as well as to the Committee for allowing me to testify here today.

Poverty and Inequality in New York City Still Soar

The main cause of hunger in New York City is poverty and inequality. Despite soaring corporate profits, the number and percentage of residents in New York State and the New York City region living in poverty in 2013 stayed at very high pre-recession levels, while median income stagnated.

One in five New Yorkers citywide remain below the federal poverty line. In Manhattan, the wealthiest five percent earn 88 times as much as the poorest 20 percent. In New York State, according to new American Community Survey data released by the Census Bureau, the poverty rate was 15.9 percent in 2012 and 16.0 percent in 2013, and the median family income was \$57,096 in 2012 and \$57,369 in 2013. In the New York City Metropolitan Region, the poverty rate was 14.8 percent in 2012 and 14.6 percent in 2013. Meaning, despite high Wall Street earnings, poverty remained high and typical families failed to earn more income.

New York State remained the state with the highest inequality of wealth level, as measured by the Gini coefficient, and has higher levels of inequality of wealth than the Dominican Republic, India, or El Salvador.

It is terribly disturbing, but unfortunately not surprising, that the poverty rate in New York remains sky-high, and that New Jersey is further slipping. This data proves beyond a doubt what we already knew – the city’s supposed economic recovery is still nearly invisible for struggling middle and low-income families. It is also clear that New York, unfortunately, remains extraordinarily divided by income, and that we do have two entirely different states co-existing side-by-side. New Yorkers living in poverty are stuck there, due to a lack of living-wage jobs and full-time employment opportunities. While the economic elite often declare a complete economic recovery, this simply is not the case for the remaining 99 percent.

The number of poor people in New York City is now greater than the entire population of Philadelphia and could fill Madison Square Garden, or the new Barclay’s Arena, more than 85 times.

Just how vast is this wealth gap? As of last year, there were 53 billionaires in New York City alone. Their collective private net worth rose from \$200 billion in 2010 to \$211 billion in 2011 to \$231.5 billion in 2012, according to *Forbes*. That’s a 16 percent jump in wealth over just three years, at a time when the income for average New York City families sank and poverty soared.

Most people cannot fully grasp what a figure such as \$231.5 billion actually means. That’s almost four times the size of the entire budget of the City of New York, which pays for the police and fire departments, public schools, water system, social services, parks, public health measures, etc. for a city of more than eight million people. The \$231.5 billion combined private net worth of these New York City billionaires now equals the annual household income of 4.6 million average New York City families. Even more outrageous, the wealth held by these 53 people is 15 million times the annual salary of someone working full-time at minimum wage for a year, meaning that the average billionaire in New York City has as much money as 289,650 minimum wage workers. Amazingly, *Forbes* recently reported the billionaire wealth in the city skyrocketed even more this year.

Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City Remain Sky High

As a result of this massive poverty, food insecurity and hunger remain high throughout New York City, with one in six city residents and one in five children living in homes that couldn’t afford enough food in the 2010-2012 time period. These levels are essentially unchanged, staying at the same high level since the start of the recession in 2008.

Statewide in New York, one in eight residents suffered food insecurity in 2010-2012, representing a 40 percent jump from the 2000-2002 time period.

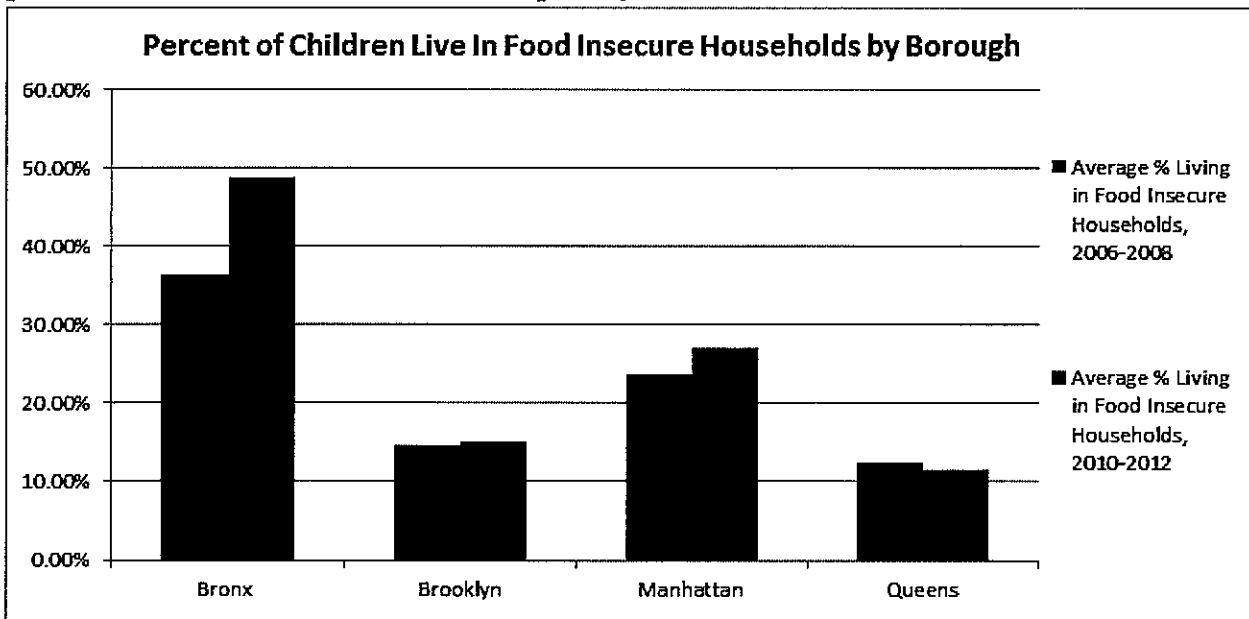
New York City’s food pantries and soup kitchens faced an increased demand of 10 percent in 2013, on top of increases of 5 percent in 2012, 12 percent in 2011, 7 percent in 2010, and 29 percent in 2009. Yet 56.8 percent of these agencies suffered from cuts in combined government and private resources, compared to only 10.87 percent that benefitted from increased resources in 2013.

One in Five New York City Children – Nearly Half a Million – Live in Food Insecure Homes

In 2010-2012, an estimated average of 406,260 children in New York City lived in food insecure households that did not have an adequate food supply throughout the year. This number represents 21.85 percent, or one in five of the city’s child population. It also represents a 10 percent increase from 2006-2008, when an estimated 369,415 New York City children lived in food insecure homes.

Borough*	Percent of Children in Food Insecure Homes (2006-08)	Percent of Children in Food Insecure Homes (2010-2012)	Percentage Change
Bronx	36.47	48.91	+ 44%
Brooklyn	14.54	15.01	+ 3%
Manhattan	23.75	27.13	+ 14%
Queens	12.45	11.58	- 7%

* In general, due to sampling issues, the data for percent of people is more accurate than the data for the total number of people food insecure. Note that, given smaller sub-samples for these boroughs and sub-populations, margins of error are higher. Citywide numbers and percentages for child food insecurity include Staten Island, but there is not enough federal food insecurity data for that borough to adequately calculate a borough-specific child food insecurity rate for Staten Island. In 2012, according to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 14.6 percent of Staten Island children lived in poverty.

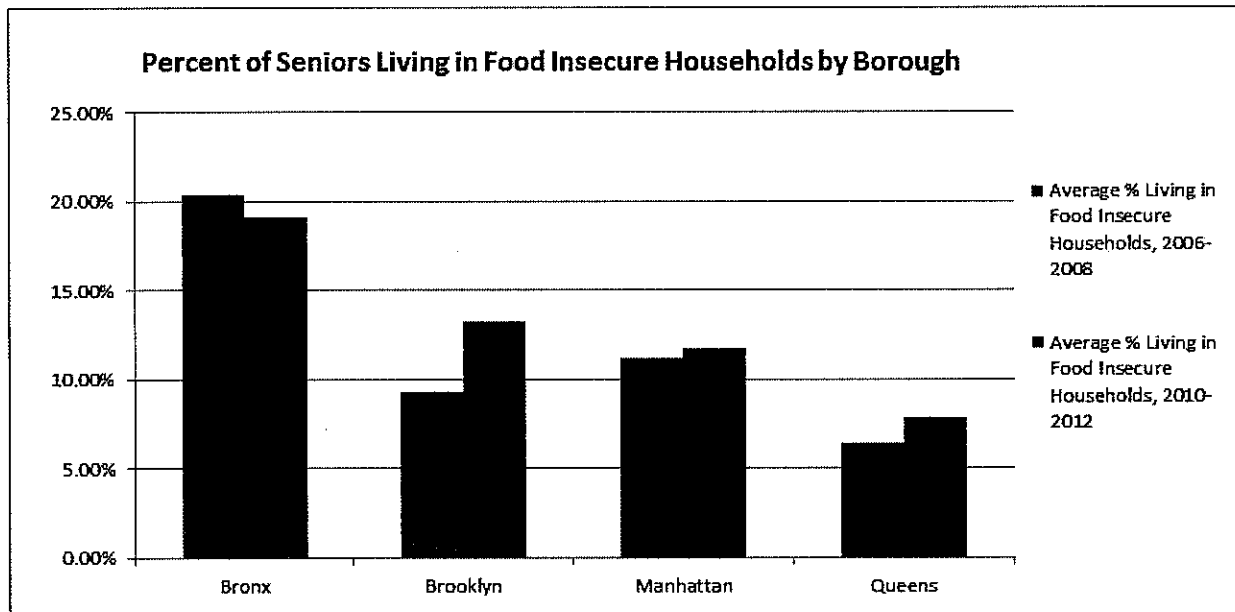


One in 10 New York City Seniors (Over the age of 60) Live in Food Insecure Households

In 2010-2012 there were an estimated 175,851 food insecure seniors over the age of 60 in the city. This number represents 11.5 percent, or one in 10 of the city’s senior population. It also represents a 33 percent increase from 2006-2008, when an estimated 132,113 New York City seniors lived in food insecure homes.

Borough*	Percent of Food Insecure Seniors (2006-08)	Percent of Food Insecure Seniors (2010-2012)	Percentage Change
Bronx	20.38	19.16	- 6%
Brooklyn	9.26	13.27	+ 4%
Manhattan	11.17	11.76	- 5%
Queens	6.4	7.86	+ 23%

* In general, due to sampling issues, the data for percent of people is more accurate than the data for the total number of people food insecure. Note that, given smaller sub-samples for these boroughs and sub-populations, margins of error are higher. Citywide numbers and percentages for food insecurity include Staten Island, but there is not enough federal food insecurity data for that borough to adequately calculate food security rates. According to U.S. Census data, Staten Island had a poverty rate of 11.6 for the years of 2011-2012; the food insecurity rate is likely similar.



Adding Insult to Injury- Massive Cuts to the Safety Net

Making matters even worse, federal nutrition assistance programs are suffering from the worst attacks in decades.

The city's food pantries and soup kitchens faced particularly severe cuts in funding through the federal FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), which suffered through both long-term, multi-year budget cuts as well as through more recent budget cuts as a result of sequestration.

The sequestration also slashed funding for the nutrition assistance that pregnant women and infants get from the WIC program and that seniors receive through meals-on-wheels.

In 2010, a Democrat-controlled Congress passed, and President Obama signed into law, the so-called Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HFKA) which slightly improved school meals, but cut \$5 billion from SNAP, by rolling back cost-of-living increases in the SNAP program that were included in the 2009 recovery bill, thereby reducing benefits for every single person that depends on the program.

In 2014, a Democrat-controlled Senate and a Republican-controlled House passed, and President Obama signed into law, a Farm Bill that cut an additional \$8.6 billion in SNAP, by denying states the ability to utilize home energy assistance benefits to trigger an increase in SNAP benefits, which is colloquially called the "heat or eat" provision.

Taken together, the HFKA and Farm Bill cuts reduced SNAP by nearly \$14 billion dollars, with many reductions going into effect as of November 1, 2013.

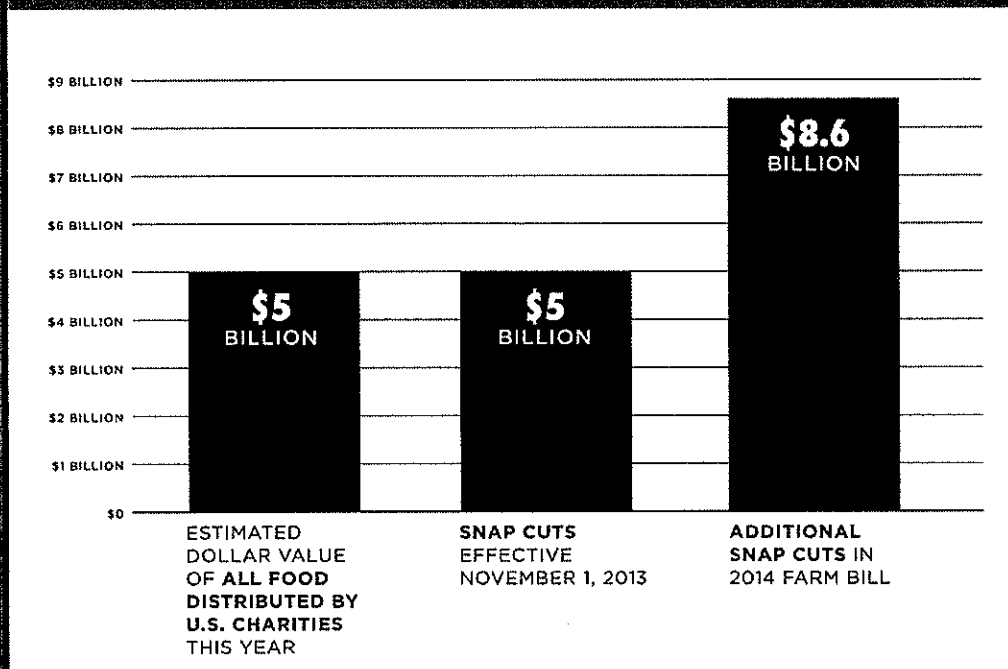
New York Governor Andrew Cuomo was able to take administrative action to prevent the heat or eat cuts from being implemented in New York, thereby saving \$457 million for the first year in SNAP benefits that would otherwise be cut. The action prevented cuts averaging \$127 per month for 300,000 affected households statewide.

However, states were powerless to prevent the HFKA cuts from being implemented, and all 3.1 million SNAP recipients in the state suffered a cut. In New York City, the average household SNAP benefit was cut by \$19 per month, equaling a \$228 reduction in groceries per year.

The amount of SNAP benefits per meal in New York City was reduced from the paltry level of \$1.70 per meal in August, 2013 to an even smaller \$1.60 per meal in August, 2014. Partially because the benefits were less adequate, few New Yorkers applied or re-applied for SNAP; the rolls declined by 125,487 people in the city during that year. As a result of both the reduction in average benefits amount and the drop in the overall caseload, low-income New York City residents will receive an estimated \$426 million less in federal SNAP funding in 2014 than in 2013.

The New York City Coalition Against Hunger estimates that all the food pantries, soup kitchens, food banks, and food rescue groups in the U.S provide, at most, \$5 billion worth of food each year. Thus, as the chart below demonstrates, the SNAP cuts dwarf all the nation's charitable donations.

SNAP CUTS DWARF FOOD CHARITY



Big Progress in SNAP Access through City's Human Resources Administration

The good news is that, for anti-poverty advocates – and for the millions of struggling New Yorkers we represent – there has been a 180 degree change at the city's leading social service agency, the Human Resources Administration (HRA). And all that change is for the better.

When much of the mainstream media covers city government, they tend to fixate on minute political squabbles, personality clashes, and procedural tiffs, rather than the far more important issue of whether city government is working better or worse for average New Yorkers. Most media is even *less* likely to cover issues impacting poverty. That's why hearings like this are so vital.

For the previous two decades, under both Mayors Giuliani and Bloomberg, HRA was a right-wing bastion that was frequently incompetent and intransigent, and often even lawless. The agency, responsible for the administration of food, health, cash assistance, and select types of job training and child care aid to low-income New Yorkers, frequently lost paperwork from

applicants, forced people to wait on lines for days, failed to return calls, treated its clients rudely, refused to admit any errors, and stubbornly clung to failing policies.

Public interest lawyers – including then Attorney-in-Chief of the New York City Legal Aid Society Steven Banks – routinely sued the agency. Courts repeatedly ruled that HRA seriously violated the law by abrogating the rights of its clients, often by illegally denying struggling New Yorkers life-saving benefits. Even after tragedies like Hurricane Sandy, HRA *still* went out of its way to deny help to families in need.

Mired in a “blame the victim” mentality, the old HRA designed most of its policies and procedures around the demonstrably false assumption that the main reason that so many New Yorkers were poor was that they were lazy or crooked. While the agency still had some talented managers – and many dedicated front-line workers – those remaining stalwarts had their hands tied by top agency management that was openly hostile to the agency’s clientele. Thus, the very agency tasked with lifting New Yorkers out of poverty all-too-often pushed them deeper into destitution.

During these two decades, poverty, hunger, and homelessness in New York City all soared. By the time Bloomberg left office, 1.8 million New Yorkers were poor, more than 1.3 million were food insecure, and more than 50,000 per night were forced to use homeless shelters, an all-time high. Yet the key metric that HRA used to determine its success was how many people it *removed* from its programs. That makes as little sense as a hospital determining its success solely by how many people leave the hospital, without differentiating how many people leave it cured, equally ill, or dead. Veterans were kicked off of aid programs just as arbitrarily as everyone else.

Ironically, the city’s policies of removing families from federally-funded programs often increased the burden on the city taxpayers, by forcing families into extraordinarily expensive yet shoddy shelters and job training programs that were of more benefit to the politically-connected contractors who ran them than to the families that they were supposed to help. The City’s policies were the worst of both worlds: they violated both the conservative ideal that government should use money efficiently and the liberal ideal that government should help lift up those most in need.

Enter Mayor de Blasio, who, in his previous roles as Chair of the City Council General Welfare Committee and Public Advocate, was a consistent, thoughtful, and progressive critic of HRA leadership and policies. Since his election, de Blasio has held two separate public events to reinforce his commitment to fighting hunger – and many more to announce plans to fight poverty and inequality.

Mayor de Blasio’s bold social service appointments backed up his rhetoric. He appointed a long-term champion of low-income New Yorkers, Lilliam Barrios-Paoli, as his Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services. And, in a move that demonstrated both daring courage and perfect common sense, de Blasio named Steven Banks – the long-time HRA watchdog – to head that agency. That’s the equivalent of a President naming Ralph Nader to oversee a federal consumer protection agency.

Literally, minutes into his new role, Banks started making massive reforms, providing exactly the kind of competent progressivism that de Blasio promised.

For starters, the agency is now treating low-income New Yorkers, and the advocates who represent them, as trusted partners, not as feared adversaries. Beyond the improvement in tone, the agency has, in just the last few months, advanced mightily in its policies and processes, by:

- 1) Taking, for the first time in nearly two decades, the federal waiver to enable unemployed recipients of SNAP (the new name for food stamps) to continue to receive this vital nutrition aid as they continue to look for work. This step alone will immediately aid tens of thousands of our most vulnerable neighbors.
- 2) Making it easier for people to pursue a higher education degree and still receive benefits.
- 3) Releasing data proving that the previous administration significantly exaggerated the success of its job training contracts.
- 4) Starting a top-to-bottom overhaul of job training programs to make them more cost-effective and productive in enabling families to achieve economic self-sufficiency.
- 5) After releasing information proving that, under the previous regimes, when clients were denied benefits and then brought cases to "fair hearings" before administrative judges, HRA often lost those hearings, HRA is now pledging to take steps to reduce the need for such costly and time-consuming hearings.

Low-income New Yorkers represented by the New York City Coalition Against Hunger are already starting to notice these positive changes, but they understand that systematic change will take time. We hope the City Council lends it full support to these changes, which are particularly important for struggling veterans

With a bureaucracy of HRA's size, change can be slow to come. Here are some of the problems that remain:

- 1) Clients don't always receive the scheduled interview calls they are supposed to receive from HRA. It can be a difficult and time-consuming process for clients and advocates to get these rescheduled.
- 2) Many clients approved for SNAP receive their first month's benefit on time but do not receive ongoing (second month) benefits in a timely manner.
- 3) Documents placed by clients in the "drop boxes" at HRA offices are often not retrieved and entered into HRA's computer system on a timely basis.
- 4) Clients receive notices requesting submission of documents that have already been submitted

Again, all these problems hit veterans particularly hard

As a result of these and other Kafka-esque access barriers, many of which are decades-old, SNAP participation in the city actually declined by 42,453 people in the last six months of the Bloomberg Administration, and by another 65,729 people in the first six months of the de Blasio

Administration, despite the still-soaring local rates of poverty, hunger, unemployment, and homelessness.

The good news is that Commissioner Banks and his team is fully aware of these remaining problems, and they have already taken concrete steps to address them.

Challenges that built up over 20 years won't be fixed in a few days. But the city's new human services leadership is already making huge progress.

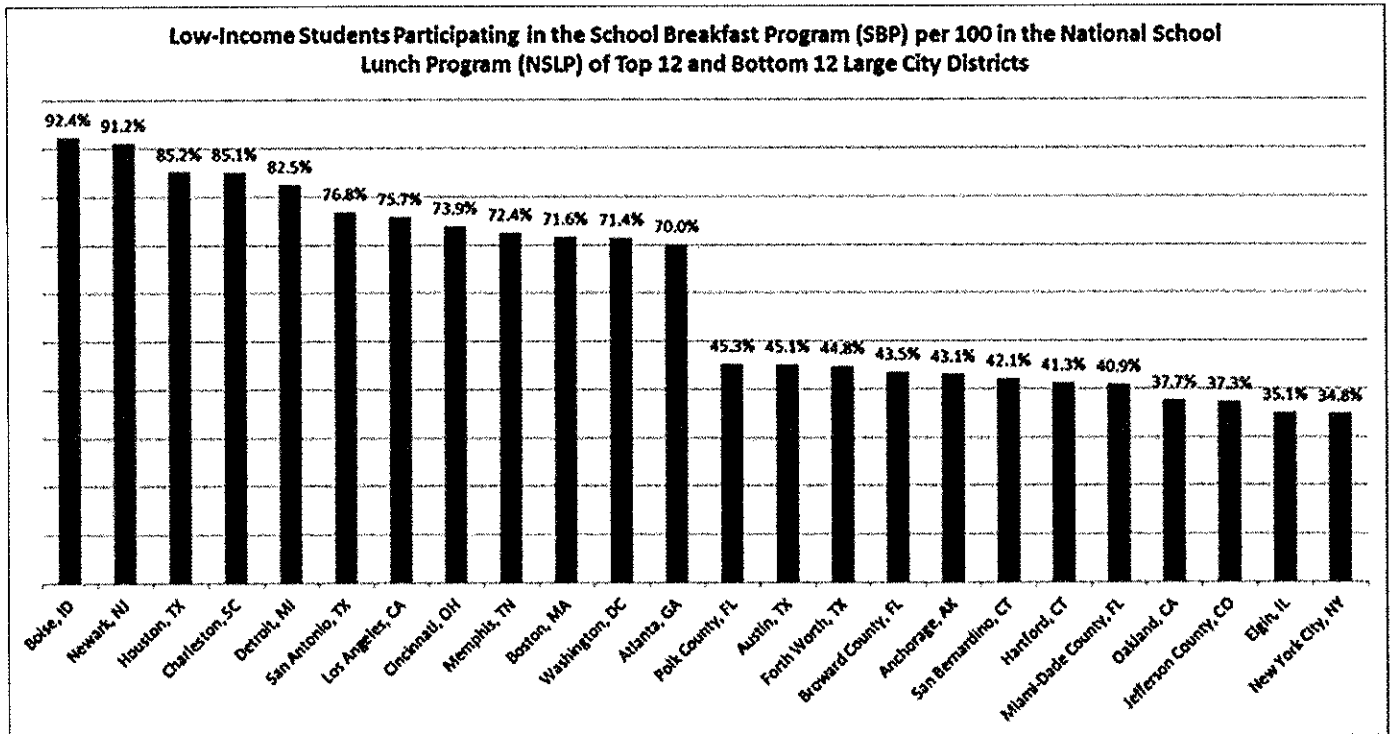
Taxpayers are getting a better bang for the buck, and struggling families are getting the basic housing, food, job training, and income support –and, with that, the hope – they desperately need. Thanks to the mayor and his appointees, these improvements are a win-win for all New Yorkers. We hope the Council can support and accelerate these changes

Breakfast in the Classroom is the One of the Best Ways to Reduce Child Hunger

For the one in five children in New York City who live in households that cannot afford enough food, school meals are a critical component to fighting child hunger. New York City has made great strides to get children to eat school meals, but we are still behind.

The City has great opportunity to improve nutrition among food insecure and hungry children, decrease childhood obesity, and receive more revenue from the federal government for the Department of Education (DOE). The City can quickly and easily achieve these outcomes by expanding the provision of school breakfast in first period classrooms.

Each day, schools across New York City offer free, universal school breakfasts. They require no paperwork, forms, hassle, or cost to the students. Despite the simplicity of this process and the outreach efforts of the DOE's Office of SchoolFood to increase participation in the School Breakfast Program (SBP), New York City's participation has significantly lagged. According to a January, 2014, report by the Food Research Action Center (FRAC) on school breakfast participation in 63 large urban school districts across the country, New York City ranked last, with only 34.8% of the students receiving free or reduced-price (FRP) lunches also receiving free breakfasts.



That's right, out of 63 big districts, New York City is dead last. It's bad enough when we lose to Boston or Philadelphia in basketball, football, hockey, or baseball, but it's downright unforgivable when we lose to them so badly in feeding our children.

Having learned first-hand of Newark's success with in-classroom breakfast, in 2008, New York City launched a pilot project to try out in-classroom breakfasts in a number of schools. At one pilot site, Public School 68 in the Bronx, every student ate breakfast together during their first-period class. The pilot is working better than anyone could have anticipated. The school's principal has said that before the pilot, an average of 50 children came to school late every day, so many that she had to assign extra staff to writing out late slips. When they started serving breakfast in their classrooms, kids came in early just for the meals, and now only about five kids a day are late—a 900 percent decrease in tardiness. The principal also mentioned that absenteeism and visits to school nurses also dropped, and in the afternoons, kids fell asleep in the classrooms less frequently. This is obviously not only good nutrition policy but also good education policy.

Given that most school districts must now have a complex system in place to collect forms and data on the income of each student's parents to determine the eligibility of each child for either free, reduced-price, or full-cost meals, when a district adopts a universal breakfast or lunch policy, not only does it reduce the stigma faced by children and thereby increases participation, it also reduces the paperwork and bureaucracy, saving the school district time and money. When kids eat breakfast in a classroom instead of a lunchroom that is a hallway or two away, they have more time to focus on their studies and are protected from the stigma of having to leave their

friends to go to a special breakfast room “for the poor kids.” Given that textbooks are widely understood to be a critical educational tool, public school districts typically lend them out free of charge to all students. The time is ripe for the nation to view school meals in the same way. Free breakfast and lunch should be universal in all classrooms around the country.

The facts also prove by far, to us as most effective in increasing participation in school breakfast – and thus stemming both obesity and food insecurity – is the implementation of breakfast in the classroom (BIC). As reported in the FRAC school breakfast study, “districts serving breakfast in the classroom have the highest participation rates.” Evidence in our own city is consistent with this finding: at 23 schools offering BIC schoolwide in January, 2012, the breakfast participation rate was 68% of all students.

By expanding breakfast in the classroom or the “grab and go” model in hallways, the Department of Education can:

Improve nutrition among food insecure and hungry children. A study published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* reports that “evidence suggests that breakfast consumption may improve cognitive function related to memory, test grades, and school attendance.” Nearly one in five children in New York City (31.4 percent, or 553,499) lives below the federal poverty level, a rate considerably higher than the national average of 22 percent. Approximately one in five children in New York City – about 406,260 – suffers from hunger or food insecurity. For children in families that are struggling to afford food, and thus often skip eating breakfast entirely, the single most effective health intervention is to provide nutritious school breakfasts.

Decrease childhood obesity – Research has linked regular breakfast consumption with lower rates of obesity. A study by Dr. Phillip Gleason and Dr. Allison Dodd found “school breakfast participation was associated with significantly lower body mass index... [and] may be a protective factor, by encouraging students to consume breakfast more regularly.” Additionally, an analysis of 47 studies about the breakfast habits of children and teens came to the conclusion that “breakfast eaters generally consumed more daily calories yet were less likely to be overweight.”

The USDA’s nutritional guidelines for school breakfast reduce the minimum calorie requirement while significantly improving the nutritional content, presenting a real opportunity for DOE to offer students a leaner, more nutritious breakfast.

Receive more revenue from the federal government – According to FRAC’s analysis, the New York City Department of Education would have collected \$53,127,696 million in additional federal funds, and served an additional 194,518 low-income students, if it met a 70:100 [FRP Breakfast: FRP Lunch] ratio during the 2012-2013 school year.

The City's pilot project to tie school meals reimbursements to Medicaid saved the city administrative costs by allowing participating children, enrolled in Medicaid, to be automatically eligible for free school meals. This means that a significant number of additional children in DOE schools had their meals automatically reimbursed by the federal government.

The only way to ensure that breakfast before the bell becomes a reality in all schools is to make it a requirement. The reality is that principals already must follow a wide variety of DOE directives on a wide variety of topics. If something is a priority for the City, it is indeed required in every school. By using this excuse to avoid a BIC requirement, the DOE is also avoiding millions of dollars in federal funds.

When there are other matters of public health, requirements are absolutely necessary. When the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene regulates schools for food safety, it doesn't let principals pick and choose which regulations they want to follow. Similarly, sex education is another public health intervention where it was deemed right to mandate the curriculum to all students at the appropriate grade level.

By leaving the decision to implement BIC up to the principal, the DOE leaves the decision to eliminate many barriers for children wanting to eat breakfast, sends the message that this is not a priority, and leaves millions of dollars in federal funds off the table. These funds could go towards better food or equipment. According to FRAC's analysis, the New York City Department of Education would have collected **\$ \$53,127,696 million in additional federal funds**, and served an additional 194,518 low-income students, if it met a 70:100 [FRP Breakfast:FRP Lunch] ratio during the 2012-2013 school year.



Testimony of David DeVaughn, MPA, Manager, Policy and Government Relations
New York City Council Joint Hearing
of the Committee on General Welfare
November 24, 2014

T2014-2071

Oversight: Hunger in New York City

Good morning Chairperson Levin and members of the committee. Thank you for holding this hearing today and putting a spotlight on hunger in New York City. With the Thanksgiving holiday approaching on Thursday, it is important to address why for many families in our city, the question isn't *what* to have for Thanksgiving dinner, but *are* we going to have Thanksgiving dinner. I appreciate the opportunity to share with you what we are learning about hunger and food insecurity in the communities we serve and what we are doing about it. In addition, I will touch on coalition efforts the City can continue to engage in to address the growing demand and need for emergency food.

City Harvest is the world's first and New York's only food rescue organization. For more than 30 years, we have been dedicated to feeding the city's hungry men, women, and children by collecting excess food that would otherwise go to waste. To address increasing need, City Harvest is scaling up operations to feed the rising number of hungry New Yorkers by delivering 4 million more pounds of food than in 2013. We are New York City's largest provider of free produce to New Yorkers in need and will work hard to rescue 50 million pounds of good food this year and deliver it free of charge to more than 500 community food programs. 75% of this food will be nutrient-dense, including produce, dairy, and meat. Between October and January alone, City Harvest pledges to rescue more than 12.5 million pounds of food.

While we pride ourselves on being the city's private response to hunger, we know the importance of the safety net that our government programs and partners provide. City Harvest is encouraged by the appetite that the new administration seems to have for a comprehensive approach of fighting hunger and food insecurity. In addition to ensuring maximum enrollment in the Federal nutrition programs, including SNAP, WIC, and school meals, we hope the administration will significantly build on its commitment to universal free school lunch and expand breakfast after the bell, to maximize the Federal dollars and participation for these programs to ensure that every student gets easily accessible healthy, free meals, regardless of income.

Hunger and Food Insecurity

Like our partners have mentioned, we too are seeing increased need in all five boroughs of New York City and specifically in the areas of the city where we provide our *Healthy Neighborhoods* programs. In these neighborhoods City Harvest partners with residents, local organizations and businesses to increase the availability of affordable fruits and vegetables in these communities and providing the nutrition education and resources to encourage wholesome meal choices. Food insecurity is highest in Bed Stuy, Brooklyn, at 27%, while in the South Bronx 25% of residents don't always know where their next meal will come from. In Washington Heights and Inwood 19% of residents are food insecure, while in Northwest Queens and the North Shore of Staten Island food insecurity stands are 16% and 14%,

respectively. In the Bronx, nearly 30% of children live in homes that don't always know where or when their next meal will come.¹

As part of our efforts to address the need in these communities, we opened our eighth Mobile Market in November to help get fresh fruits and vegetables to residents in need in the Mariner's Harbor neighborhood of Staten Island. Cadets from West Point helped distribute free carrots, corn, cabbage and potatoes to nearly 200 families, our nutrition education department showed residents techniques to prepare a healthy carrot, cabbage and potato soup, and community health partners shared information about managing diabetes and heart disease. The new Mobile Market in Mariner's Harbor will operate twice a month to help families in need ensure they have enough good produce on the table. This month also commemorates 10 years since the opening of City Harvest's first Mobile Market in the Melrose neighborhood of the South Bronx. Since 2004, our bi-weekly Mobile Markets we have distributed fresh fruits and vegetables free of charge to thousands of New Yorkers in need, including distributing more than 8.3 million pounds of produce and holding hundreds of cooking demonstrations through 675 unique markets. We plan to open a second market in Washington Heights/Inwood in Spring 2015.

With this and many other efforts throughout the city, hunger is still an issue in New York City. Our network of soup kitchens and food pantries has seen a 43% increase in visits since 2008. Between 2008 and 2014 visits to our network of community food programs increased by:

- Visits in the Bronx increased 76%.
- Visits in Staten Island increased 53%.
- Visits in Brooklyn increased 40%.
- Visits in Queens increased 39%.

Poverty in New York City

Poverty in New York City remains stubbornly high. The number of people living below the poverty threshold increased in 2013 to 1.7 million New Yorkers without enough money to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and housing.² This accounts for nearly 1 in 5 New Yorkers. Close to 31% of Bronx residents, and more than 23% of Brooklyn residents, are living in poverty. Approximately 523,000 (29.8%) children live in poverty in New York City, as do over 196,000 seniors (18.8%). While households are juggling fixed costs like housing and medical care, food is an elastic expense. Families skimp on meals and skip meals to save money for other expenses.

¹ Gundersen, C., E. Engelhard, A. Satoh, & E. Waxman. *Map the Meal Gap 2014: Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level*. Feeding America, 2014.

² DeNavas-Walt, Carmen and Bernadette D. Proctor, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-249, Income and Poverty in the United States: 2013, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2014.

Many residents visiting soup kitchens and food pantries are working, but are still unable to make ends meet partly because they don't qualify for government support. 83% of the households below the poverty line have at least one person working, but wages are not keeping up with the cost of living in New York City. A large number of jobs are low-wage and don't allow families to meet their basic needs. As a result, many working New Yorkers fall into the gap where eligibility for SNAP ends and self-sufficiency begins. A family of three earning \$19,790 is defined as living in poverty. This threshold does not take into account geography or related cost of living expenses. The qualifications for government assistance are the same in Manhattan as in Jackson, Mississippi. A family of three earning \$25,727 (or 130% of the poverty threshold) does not qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or income assistance to help put food on their tables. If a family has a higher income, their options are limited and they will likely skip meals or turn to community food programs like the ones City Harvest serves.

2014 Self-Sufficiency Standard for New York City

City Harvest is a partner in the release of the 2014 Self-Sufficiency Standard Report. Results from the study, prepared for the Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement with the support of City Harvest, the United Way of NYC, and the NY Community Trust, will be issued on Tuesday morning, December 2 at The New School's John L. Tishman Auditorium. City Harvest has relied on the Self-Sufficiency Standard to help us understand "the gap" – the level of income New Yorkers need to be able to afford basic necessities and the point at which residents no longer qualify for public benefits, including SNAP. We invite all at this hearing to join us for the exclusive release of the report and a dialogue among leaders from the public and private sectors, philanthropy and the non-profit world around issues and opportunities. We will explore how business leaders and policymakers can make a difference for the future of New York City. Many New Yorkers who earn too much to qualify for assistance still have to choose between paying their rent and putting dinner on the table. For the first time, we know exactly how many people fall into this gap.

New York City Alliance for Child Nutrition Reauthorization

Convened by City Harvest and the Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy Teachers College Columbia University, the New York City Alliance for Child Nutrition Reauthorization (NYC4CNR) is a group of diverse stakeholders working together for a strong Child Nutrition Act when the current legislation expires in September 2015. The Child Nutrition Act (CNA) covers school meals, summer meals, Women Infants and Children funding, and other programs that feed children. City Harvest is working to inform NYC4CNR members of CNA-related news, hold events with elected officials and advocates, and finalize a 2015 priorities document specific to New York City that informs

advocacy with local and national partners. We look forward to working with the City Council on CNA priorities for New York City in 2015.

Lunch 4 Learning

City Harvest is proud to be a partner of the Lunch 4 Learning campaign. Spearheaded by Community Food Advocates, the campaign is a broad, diverse coalition-based campaign working towards making free and healthy school meals available to all New York City public school students, regardless of income. The campaign believes that universal free and healthy school meals eliminate the poverty stigma associated with school lunch, get more students eating, and have far reaching citywide impact on childhood hunger, public health, and educational outcomes. Currently, 250,000 of the 780,000 students who are eligible for free or reduced priced meals do not participate. The Lunch 4 Learning campaign is mobilizing organizations and individuals citywide to elevate universal free and healthy school meals and focus the attention of the Mayor, Chancellor and City Council Members to make this a food policy and educational priority. Beginning this 2014-15 school year, NYC's middle school students are receiving free school lunch due to efforts of the campaign. The campaign will continue to work towards understanding successful implementation in middle school settings and ultimately making school meals healthy and universally free for all NYC public school students. We thank the City Council for its continued support.

Powered By Breakfast Coalition

As a member of the Powered by Breakfast Coalition, City Harvest continues to advocate for expansion of the Breakfast After the Bell Program throughout the City, in order to ensure that more children have access to a healthy breakfast. Since 2003, breakfast has been free for all 1.1 million NYC public students, regardless of income, but less than a quarter of kids (224,000) are actually eating breakfast at school every day. Because breakfast is largely served before school starts, participation in the program is dreadfully low in New York City. We are the largest school district in the country, yet we are in last place for feeding hungry kids breakfast (ranking 63rd out of the 63 large urban school districts). Innovative programs like Breakfast After the Bell move breakfast out of the cafeteria before school starts and into the classroom and other accessible areas as part of the school day. Children who need food shouldn't be penalized by tough morning schedules or stigmatized by going to a cafeteria before school starts. It has worked in many other large districts including Newark, Houston, and Chicago, and it will work here. Hungry children who need food can get it; they are ready to learn. And the federal government reimburses every meal we serve; we're currently leaving upwards of \$50 million dollars on the table. We thank the City Council for its support of this campaign.

City Harvest is deeply interested in working with the Council and Administration to ensure adequate support and attention to hunger in the city.

Again, thank you for your attention to these urgent matters and for all your work on to improve the lives and conditions of low-income New Yorkers.

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MORE THAN FOUR DECADES OF SERVICE

MET COUNCIL

ACTS OF CHARITY • DEEDS OF KINDNESS • צדקה וגמילות חסדים

**New York City Council Oversight Hearing:
Hunger in New York City
November 24, 2014 at 11:00am
14th Floor Committee Room at 250 Broadway, New York, NY 10007**

Thank you, Chair Levin and the Committee on General Welfare for inviting us to speak today.

My name is Jessica Hughson-Andrade and I am the Outreach Manager at Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty.

For more than four decades, Met Council has supported and championed families, seniors and adults living in poverty and near-poverty. Met Council provides immediate assistance to New Yorkers in crisis and creates pathways to self sufficiency through the following programs: America's largest kosher food pantry system, emergency social services, family violence services, home repairs, homecare services, benefits enrollment and outreach, and affordable housing. Our grassroots Jewish Community Council network provides support to families in their neighborhoods—right where they live.

In the fight against poverty, we serve immigrants, seniors living on fixed incomes, the un- and underemployed, and all others in need. As an organization founded on Jewish values, we serve everyone with dignity and empathy, regardless of race, ethnicity or religion.

We leverage government contracts with privately raised funds from individuals and foundations to increase the impact of our services.

Our culturally sensitive professionals provide an array of services to insular and immigrant clients utilizing a nuanced understanding of the clients' community norms to move them from crisis to stability.

As many of the people in this room know, there are 1.3 million food insecure New Yorkers; one in five are children. For many of our clients, the high cost of kosher food presents a unique challenge: on average, a kosher meal is 30% more expensive. While, Statewide, most families run out of SNAP benefits by the third week each month, a family that keeps kosher runs out by the second week.

Though all of the food in our system is kosher, our services are available to anyone who is hungry—regardless as to whether or not they keep kosher.

Allow me to share with you a story of one of these food insecure New Yorkers. For 20 years, Gail taught Math and Reading to more than 300 students at a local Brooklyn public school. She aspired to instill a love of learning in her students to prepare them for future challenges. Then in 2012, her life dramatically changed when she was diagnosed with lupus and fibromyalgia. The frequent trips to the hospital and the

excruciating pain cost her job. She tried to search for help on her own, but decades of being middle class, left her uninformed and unable to effectively navigate the social safety net. She explained that “this past year has really been a battle find hope.” Then she turned to Met Council. Our social service team was able to enroll her into government benefits, including SNAP, sign her up for monthly food distributions, and, with privately raised dollars, pay one month’s rent when her medical bills began to pile up. By helping Gail through these programs, her Met Council social worker helped stabilize her life.

Our food services are designed to sustain and empower hungry New Yorkers, like Gail. They include the country’s largest kosher food pantry system, emergency food cards, home delivered meals, food rescue and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment assistance.

Our goal, through our various food programs, is to provide a dignified solution to hunger.

In FY13, Met Council provided:



5.1 million pounds of food to 33 monthly food distribution sites through our **Kosher Food Pantry System** —the largest in America — to supplement meals for low income families



8,750 **Home Delivered Meals** to 91 frail seniors in order to increase nutritional intake and decrease social isolation



72,000 pounds of **Food Rescued** from schools and hospitals and delivered to families in need



\$488,000 in **Emergency Food Cards** to 3,000 clients to empower clients during a crisis to feed themselves and their families



\$3 million in government assistance by enrolling 10,329 families into **SNAP** to empower families to purchase food and spur local economic activity

Recently, federal entitlement changes have put additional strains on food insecure families.

Since ARRA (American Recovery Reinvestment Act) sunset last November, we have seen a 15% increase in demand on our pantries from new clients and an additional increase in need from our previous clients.

Although nationwide SNAP enrollment has decreased, food insecurity remains as high as it was pre-recession. With the high cost of living in New York City, we have not seen a decrease in demand for SNAP or food assistance.

In order to help more New Yorkers in their fight against hunger, we would suggest the following approaches:

- First, additional outreach and education to the immigrant population, seniors and the recently unemployed on SNAP eligibility. We are proud to work with New York State and Hunger Solutions for SNAP outreach; however, these three vulnerable populations need additional efforts.
 - Many undocumented immigrants do not know that their children, whether born in the US or not, are eligible for SNAP.
 - Seniors who have worked their entire lives, but do not have a deep safety net are unaware that they are qualified for SNAP. Specifically, many Holocaust survivors are eligible for SNAP, but do not think that they qualify because of their Nazi Victim compensation funds.
 - And finally, recently unemployed do not enroll into SNAP because it is their expectation that their unemployment will be short term since the recession is over. These adults do not know that SNAP can be short terms as well.
- Our second suggestion is to increase CBO capacity by expanding the Paperless Office System (POS).
- Lastly, we applaud the Administration's and HRA's redesign and increased accessibility of ACCESS NYC. To best serve the hungry and needy in New York City, we recommend that HRA add a caseworker porthole for our CBO's to utilize the new tools on behalf of their clients with pre-authorized consent. Thanks to the City Council, Met Council is able to deploy culturally sensitive case workers to neighborhoods throughout the city to best serve hungry New Yorkers. Case workers' knowledge is essential in overcoming client's barriers such as language, computer and internet access and understanding.

In conclusion, Met Council could not continue providing critical social services to thousands of needy New Yorkers each year without the vital partnership of New York City Council. We deeply value your leadership and partnership and look forward to working together to help the needy throughout the New York area.

Thank you. I would be happy to take any questions you have at this time.



GOD'S LOVE WE DELIVER
Lisa Zullig, Director of Nutrition Services
Testimony to the New York City Council's Committee on General Welfare
Oversight: Hunger in New York City
November 24, 2014

God's Love is New York City's leading not-for-profit provider of life-sustaining meals and nutritional counseling for people living with life-threatening illnesses. We are dedicated to cooking – and delivering – the specific, nutritious meals a client's severe illness and treatment so urgently require. We support families by providing meals for the children and senior caregivers of our clients. All of our services are provided free of charge, and we are proud that in our over 29 year history, we have never had a waiting list. Illness knows no boundaries, and the diversity of our client population bears that out. We serve every demographic and 90% of our clients live at or below the Federal Poverty Level.

God's Love We Deliver began with one person's simple, compassionate response to hunger. From the humble beginning of delivering one meal to one dying man, we have now delivered over 15 million meals to one of the most underserved and isolated populations in our city: those who are at home, sick and unable to take care of their most basic need – the need for food and nutrition. We literally reach every neighborhood and street in all 5 boroughs, delivering over 1.2 million meals to over 5,000 men, women and children with severe illness in the last year alone.

At God's Love, nutrition is our signature difference. Recent research has shown that access to nutrition therapy and home-delivered meals produces better health outcomes and saves precious healthcare dollars. There is a steadily increasing recognition of the role that proper food and sound nutrition counseling play in the management of serious illness, allowing clients to remain at home and avoid or shorten costly stays in hospitals and nursing homes. As part of our commitment to food as medicine, our 6 Registered Dietitians tailor each meal to meet each client's specific medical needs. Our multilingual staff provides information, outreach, education, and enrollment for communities speaking Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian, and Haitian Creole. With our roots in HIV/AIDS care, we retain strong ties with the LGBT community. We also publish and disseminate disease-specific nutrition guides free of charge to clients and the community. Last year, we gave away more than 10,000 guides.

God's Love is an integral and unique part of the hunger safety net in the City. While other emergency food assistance programs, like SNAP, food banks and congregate meal sites, play an essential role in the lives of many New Yorkers, the clients we serve are too sick to access these services. Furthermore, due to their illnesses, they often have complicated dietary needs that cannot be addressed by traditional food services. For those who cannot access food pantries or meal programs, home-delivered meals ensure that these clients, who are often isolated, alone and unable to accomplish the normal activities of daily living, continue to receive the nutrition their condition so urgently demands, so that they are able to remain nourished and in their homes.

To meet the individual dietary needs of each client, our Registered Dietitians (RD) conduct a complete nutrition assessment over the phone. Nutritional counseling based on the client's anthropometrics, diagnoses, medications, symptoms, food security, laboratory values and social factors is performed, and a specific menu plan is created. The need for additional food resources is also assessed, and if

appropriate, referrals are made. Our meal program allows for a tremendous amount of customization with 12 discrete dietary restrictions, and our RDs continuously monitor clients' needs and health status.

Looking at the overall picture of the City, hunger affects both the well and the sick. God's Love distinctively addresses the specific needs of this latter group and endeavors to improve the health and well-being of those affected by serious illness.

Every day our clients struggle with malnutrition, hunger, illness and isolation. When they contact God's Love, they find a community of volunteers, staff and Board members, who care deeply about them. Together, we are dedicated to cooking and delivering the individually-tailored meals and nutrition counseling our clients require at a time in their lives when they need it most. We do this - free of charge - with dignity, respect and compassion.

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For district specific statistics concerning clients and meals delivered, please reach out to Alissa Wassung.

Testimony by New York Legal Assistance Group

before the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

Oversight – Hunger in New York City

November 24, 2014

Chair Levin and Distinguished Members of the Committee, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak about hunger in New York City. My name is Camille Zentner and I am a supervising attorney with the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) working in our public assistance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits practice. NYLAG is a nonprofit law office dedicated to providing free legal services in civil law matters to low-income New Yorkers. NYLAG serves immigrants, seniors, the homebound, families facing foreclosure, renters facing eviction, low-income consumers, those in need of government assistance, children in need of special education, domestic violence victims, persons with disabilities, patients with chronic illness or disease, low-wage workers, low-income members of the LGBT community, Holocaust survivors, as well as others in need of free legal services.

As a backdrop to our perspective on hunger and New York City's administration of the SNAP program, I would like to briefly address the intrinsic link between the lack of affordable housing and hunger in our City. NYLAG's public benefits and housing practices work closely together to prevent evictions and save affordable housing. We strongly advocate for a right to counsel in housing court, which will keep hundreds, or even thousands, of New Yorkers in their homes. According to statistics from the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and the Human Resources Administration (HRA), in September 2014, there were **nearly 60,000 homeless people** - including **almost 25,000 children**,

sleeping each night in the New York City municipal shelter system, with thousands more sleeping on the streets. Many families are forced into homelessness when they are wrongfully evicted or compelled to leave homes that are not regulated or otherwise subsidized by the government, or because they face poor or overcrowded housing conditions, domestic violence or job loss. Once homeless, people and families cannot obtain, store and prepare food.

For New Yorkers facing hunger, access to SNAP benefits is a means to basic sustenance. NYLAG commends HRA's recent and evolving improvements aimed at making the SNAP program more accessible. We also appreciate HRA's invitations to and partnership in ongoing working groups addressing various public assistance and SNAP-related issues emphasizing accessibility and customer service. In recent months, however, NYLAG's clients have experienced increasing and specific difficulties related to maintenance of SNAP benefits.

The most common SNAP problems our clients face are related to failures in the recertification process. HRA has developed systems to make recertification easier for the Agency and for households. HRA, for instance, allows telephone interviews for recertification. However, in innumerable cases HRA fails to call a recipient within an appointed timeframe or sends the phone appointment notices too late, frequently resulting in eventual termination of SNAP benefits for eligible households.

Where households are able to reschedule the call or go into a SNAP center, cases are often terminated anyway. Even if the case is reopened there are frequently gaps in benefits. This problem disproportionately impacts SNAP households that have members with disabilities who most often use the phone call system.

Fair hearings on these SNAP losses are difficult to request in a timely manner because the Agency sends notices about recertification a month in advance of the timeline required by law, meaning that when recipient does not get SNAP benefits after the end of a certification period, the household

may only have days to request a hearing before the statute of limitations on the notice runs out. Just last week I met with Diane, who receives SSI based on disability. In September, Diane received notice of a SNAP phone recertification interview and waited from 10AM – 2PM on the appointed date but did not receive a call. She went to her SNAP center the next day, submitted her recertification documents, and scheduled a new phone date but again no call came. She walked into the Center again that afternoon and met with a SNAP worker. After the Agency's phone failures, her two visits to the center, two meetings with workers, and her submission of documents, Diane did not get her November SNAP benefits; this month she is choosing between using her SSI benefits for rent or food.

For the phone interview process to be workable for HRA and for recipients, increased resources and planning are needed so that HRA can consistently send notices about calls timely; have enough staff to make the calls within the appointed timeframes; troubleshoot problems with the phone recertification process; and stop the progression towards termination where the phone system fails.

Where our clients successfully apply or recertify, they also face myriad budgeting issues, often resulting in significant food loss.

Recently, our clients are experiencing significant reductions in their SNAP benefits due to human and system error related to assessing household utility costs. Stemming from the changes in the federal Farm Bill earlier this year, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and the Human Resources Administration issued various policy directives and implemented computer system changes to capture the type and level of utility costs of SNAP applicants and recipients. *See, e.g.*, OTDA GIS 14 TA/DC023 (June 20, 2014); HRA Policy Bulletin 14-68-ELI (June 25, 2014). Unfortunately, rather than simply implement the new authority with regard to how utility costs must be considered for SNAP-budgeting purposes, these changes default SNAP budgets to use the lowest standard utility allowance, which is in

effect a default to low food benefit levels for a household, often resulting in erroneous and significant SNAP reductions.

The error seems to occur whenever an HRA worker is reviewing or making any routine change or update to a SNAP budget, thus not necessarily highlighting the utility issue to the worker or recipient. Notices then sent to clients do not adequately describe this particular budget change, making it difficult for recipients to understand what is going on or challenge the loss at the center level or through a fair hearing. Individual SNAP households experience hundreds of dollars of SNAP losses – which are food losses – due to this problem. HRA should provide staff with training to understand the new rules and utilize the new system appropriately, the system should not default to recipient's greatest harm, and it should include adequate alerts to workers to assess utility costs.

Failure to properly deduct medical expenses for households with members who are seniors or have disabilities is also a recurring budgeting problem. Many of our clients report submitting information and receipts to the centers and being told that these expenses are irrelevant, or report thinking that they have been properly deducted when they have not, even where the records and receipts make it into the case file. Frequently, our clients with severe medical conditions require special diets and many costly medications or other physical and mental supports that are not completely covered by insurance, where clients are insured. SNAP does not contemplate special dietary concerns and it is especially important – and often crucial to a recipient's health – that medical expense deductions are budgeted to maximize food access and nutrition for these recipients. HRA workers must understand and proactively help households identify and support these medical expense deductions.

Finally, we have seen one particular budgeting problem that exclusively affects low-income senior citizens who are working under the federal Senior Community Service Employment Program, or SCSEP. This program is designed, as the United States Code enacting it states, “[t]o foster individual

economic self-sufficiency and promote useful opportunities in community service activities . . . for unemployed low-income persons who are age 55 or older, particularly persons who have poor employment prospects.” 42 USC 3056(a)(1). As part of achieving these goals, income from any SCSEP activities is specifically exempted from eligibility determinations for SNAP benefits. Nonetheless, HRA budgets this income, causing major food losses to vulnerable senior New Yorkers. Like the other budgeting issues outlined above, intensive staff training and guidance would significantly reduce these errors.

Problems continue when these losses and terminations of SNAP benefits are challenged at fair hearings. HRA’s SNAP fair hearing compliance unit is overwhelmed. Appellants who are able to navigate the system such as to successfully request and win a fair hearing often do not get lost or corrected ongoing benefits for months, well outside the federal regulatory timeframe requiring timely and full compliance. When clients “win” on the utility or medical expense deduction issues, they may wait months for rebudgeting and even then are frequently budgeted incorrectly. When clients “win” on recertification issues, recipients are often erroneously tasked with duplicating submitted information and applications, and then provided benefits from a later date than appropriate. Even when the Agency is definitively found to have erred in a budgeting matter, it may take several months to access benefits: in one of our SCSEP cases it was only after NYLAG escalated the compliance issue to high-level central SNAP staff that the problem was fixed, despite the favorable hearing decision and clear federal law and rules. “Hearing compliance” may sound like bland bureaucratic terminology, but the continued SNAP losses translate directly into food loss, instability, and hunger; eventual recovery of the benefits cannot undo the harm of the prolonged experience of hunger. SNAP compliance needs more resources to allow its dedicated workers to address and implement all of the hearing directives more quickly and with more accuracy.

We appreciate the reforms that HRA has made over the past several months and believe SNAP access and maintenance will be greatly improved when HRA addresses the above problems. I ask the Council to continue working with the administration and encourage HRA to consider implementing our suggestions to ensure that all New Yorkers can access the benefits they need to help achieve food security.

Thank you for your time and attention to our testimony about our clients and their experiences. NYLAG looks forward to continuing to work with you to address these issues and reduce the problem of hunger in our City and welcomes the opportunity to discuss these issues further.

Respectfully submitted,

Camille Zentner, Esq., Supervising Attorney



November 24, 2014

Stephen Levin
Chairman
Committee on General Welfare
New York City Council

Re: Oversight: Hunger Hearing in New York City – Single Stop comments

Dear Chairman Levin,

On behalf of Single Stop, I wish to thank you and the Committee for the opportunity to submit comments on the issue of pervasive hunger in New York City. We know that you and the committee together with the Human Resources Administration have worked diligently on this issue and I respectfully offer our observations and recommendations for consideration.

Hunger in New York City

Hunger does not have a face. Hunger affects children, teenagers, adults, seniors and even college students. Between 2010 and 2012, one in six New Yorkers, including one in five of our city's children and one in ten of our city's seniors, lived in households that were food insecure because the family could not afford enough to eat. These levels remain unchanged since the start of the recession in 2008¹. New York City's food pantries and soup kitchens are facing so much demand that many were forced to turn people away in 2013. Moreover, food insecurity disproportionately affects minorities. Among Single stop clients, 52% are Hispanic/Latino, 25% are non-Hispanic black, and 9% are white.

Single Stop uses a "one-stop shop" model to coordinate access to resources that help low-income New York families secure public benefits, access higher education opportunities, and achieve financial self-sufficiency. We partner with community-based organizations and community colleges to operate 65 sites in all five boroughs through which we served 150,000 households last year alone. Six of those are located at the city's largest food pantries. Single Stop is proud to be the city's largest single network of Paperless Office System sites that allow eligible people to apply for SNAP directly from Single Stop locations.

So far in 2014 alone, Single Stop has helped 12,755 New York City households enroll in SNAP. Additionally, 5,408 were referred to food pantries, and even more accessed pantries located in the same place as the Single Stop site. Single Stop also connects people with other food assistance programs such

¹ New York City Coalition against Hunger. <https://nyccah.org/files/FINAL%20Hunger%20Survey%20Report%20Web%20Site.pdf>



as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and school meals.

The Single Stop Model

Single Stop's model is designed to help low-income families and individuals reach financial stability and lift them out of poverty by providing them access to the full spectrum of benefits and resources available to them. Our services include public benefits screening, application assistance, and holistic case management.

What we are able to observe through our work in the community is that clients are struggling to put food on the table each month even though they are in receipt of SNAP benefits. Single Stop continues to counsel SNAP clients who are often forced to turn to food pantries to be able to provide for their families. As you know, food pantries do a tremendous job providing for thousands of hungry New Yorkers each day, but the bottom line is that there are a host of other issues that need to be addressed to complement benefits like SNAP and services like food pantries. Low-income individuals must be given the opportunity to access all of the benefits and services that exist to help them.

As such, Single Stop also provides the following in order to address the full spectrum of need:

- Eligibility screenings for tax credits like the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit, child care subsidies, or rental assistance;
- Free legal, tax, and financial counseling;
- Free screenings for college students who may be eligible for federal grants such as the Pell grant;
- Assistance with enrollment into programs like the New York State Health Exchanges and Cash Assistance; and
- Follow-up to ensure receipt of benefit and/or service.

When New Yorkers arrive at a food pantry where a Single Stop site is located, they not only get access to food, but are able to access a wide variety of other financial supports that allow them to be able to afford food on their own in the future. In 2014, Single Stop clients filed 79,295 unduplicated tax returns. Our model takes into consideration the idea that SNAP alone cannot solve the broader issue of hunger; families need to build up a foundation for economic security which includes access to a host of other benefits and resources. Far too often, we come across situations of mothers unable to afford day care services and forced to take leave without pay, exacerbating the issue of not having enough money to pay for food. And more recently, we are beginning to see the issue of food insecurity and hunger pop up on college campuses. Until we take a holistic approach to attacking poverty as the root cause of hunger, it will be very difficult to envision an end to hunger in this city.



Hunger among College Students

An issue of late that has been getting some media attention is the idea that hunger exists where we least expect it: college campuses. The stereotypical college student is no longer just the 18-year-old without dependents and with no real need to work at all because of familial financial support. Nontraditional students, on the other hand, tend to be older, have their own families to care for, and are usually forced to work at least one job in order to make ends meet while making an investment in their education and future. Recently, more and more colleges are reporting that their students struggle with balancing school, work, and having enough money to eat three times a day. According to a recent scholarly article², college students are subject to a high number of potential risk factors for food insecurity and hunger. College students face increased tuition and housing costs, the need to work at least part-time to make ends meet while receiving low wages that do not represent the actual cost of living. To add insult to injury, the federal government has put restrictions on SNAP eligibility that prevent many college students from receiving SNAP benefits. As more and more students attend college with the idea that a college education is the solution to break out of the cycle of poverty, they are sometimes pulled back in due to the universally hefty price tag of postsecondary education.

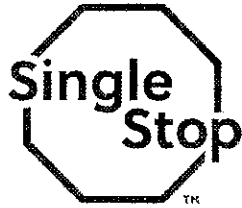
There are colleges in New York that are making significant adjustments in addressing this silent problem. Take Kingsborough Community College (KCC) in Brooklyn and Hostos Community College (HCC) in the South Bronx for example. In partnership with the Food Bank for New York City, KCC and HCC have piloted campus food pantries that are available for all students³. Pantries coordinate their hours of operation with class schedules so that more students can be accommodated throughout the day. In addition, some colleges offer food preparation classes, meal vouchers for students in dire need, and on-site nutritionists. Many also partner with on-campus child care centers to ensure that student-parents and their children have access to food. The success of these programs has resulted in the Food Bank beginning to launch more programs in at least 10 other schools.

Recommendations and Broader Policy Issues

Single Stop offers four specific policy recommendations. Two of these—universal school meals for K-12 students and increased access to food pantries on college campuses—have the potential to give low-income students immediate relief from food insecurity during the day. Our third recommendation seeks to maximize participation in federal and state programs so that more families can begin to build a foundation for economic security, which also means the ability to put food on the table each day. Finally, we recommend raising the minimum wage as a long-term solution to ensure that no working individuals and their children have to face hunger and food insecurity.

² Gaines et al. (2014). Predicting the role of financial factors, resources and skills in predicting food security status among college students.

³ West, Melanie. (Oct. 9, 2014). [Food Pantries Grow on New York Campuses](#).



1. Make K-12 school meals universal and free

The fact that half of all SNAP participants are children is staggering⁴. Hunger prevents children from reaching their full potential in school and otherwise. The trajectory of hungry children looks like this: children who do not have enough to eat are not going to be able to focus and do well in school. They are

more likely to get sick more often. They are less likely to graduate from high school and go on to college in order to build a foundation for economic security and provide for their children down the line⁵. This is what is at stake. An endless generational cycle of poverty.

Earlier this year, the New York City Department of Education approved free lunches for most middle school students. This was a significant victory for anti-hunger advocates but some of this work still needs to be translated into elementary and high schools. Overall participation in school meal programs is low—but not because a lack of need; many students whose family incomes are above the \$36,000 per year cut-off for free or reduced-priced meals are still struggling to meet basic needs which include providing a lunch box of food for their children⁶.

Providing free and nutritious meals at school can have a dramatic impact on a student's academic, health, and economic futures. Children that are fed well will foster a more vibrant learning experience whereby every student can and will participate. Students would no longer have to feel ashamed that they receive vouchers because their families are "poor." Universal school meals means no student will be judged for eating subsidized meals and the stigma is eliminated. We must advocate for universal school meals for all students (K-12) all year round.

1. Food pantries and EBT-accepting food stores should be the norm across New York college campuses

If colleges can support their students through periods of tough economic conditions, they will have a greater chance of graduating and pursuing careers that build the foundation for economic security and the middle class. Therefore, as the number of food pantries on college campuses in New York City begins to rise through the work of private partnerships, we recommend the city continue to promote them. We also ask that the city consider funding Single Stop as part of CUNY's 2014 budget priorities to ensure that students are getting all of the supports and coordinated services they need to graduate. In addition, we urge colleges to allow on-campus food stores to accept EBT cards as an additional way to ensure that students do not go hungry.

2. Maximize participation in all federal programs to address the full spectrum of difficulties faced by low-income individuals and families

Social safety net programs are designed to alleviate poverty in this country. Yet an overwhelming number of Americans, including New Yorkers, are not participating in federal programs that are

⁴From the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. [SNAP is the nation's biggest child nutrition program.](#)

⁵From [NoKidHungry.org](#)

⁶From Lunch 4 Learning. [A campaign for free and healthy school lunch for all.](#)



available to them. In New York City, for example, HRA reported that in 2010 more than 2 million residents were eligible to receive SNAP but did not apply—that’s roughly 25% of the eligible population⁷. The bottom line is that we should prioritize ending the dependence on food charities and to do so we must address ways to empower potential clients and make it easier to enroll into federal programs.

Single Stop commends the city for its efforts to modernize its Access NYC portal to streamline access to federal programs. Single Stop strongly encourages the city to continue investing in Access NYC and its ability to allow clients to apply for Cash Assistance and other programs under the city’s control. Moreover, we encourage the city to continue using aggressive efforts to use data collected from a wide array of programs to pinpoint populations that are underutilizing services. A myriad of data sources from NYCHA data to information on unpaid utility bills could be used to pinpoint individuals that are eligible but not actually receiving federal support.

The city cannot do this work alone. Many of the programs that clients are eligible for require application through the state (i.e. health insurance) or the federal government (i.e. tax credits). Single Stop calls on the city to continue working with Single Stop and other efforts to create technology and human service platforms that allow clients to access all available federal resources in a single place. Single Stop is currently engaging strategic leaders to discuss ways to transform the delivery of services. We know that too often vulnerable and hungry New Yorkers face a maze of city offices and complex rules when they seek aid. We aim to transform these systems to take a “client first” approach, reimagining a city in which those seeking help with hunger are treated with dignity, transparency and respect. Advances in technology and a robust network of human service partners and a committed administration make this transformation possible.

3. Raise the minimum wage

Mayor Bill de Blasio recently signed an executive order that raised the minimum hourly wage to \$13.13 for thousands of city contract workers working in the city. The raise applies to workers employed by large businesses that are tenants of buildings developed with the help of city subsidies. This initiative is a huge step in the right direction and will likely help the city’s most vulnerable populations and may in some cases raise families above the federal poverty threshold. However, we believe that the order does not quite go far enough. For instance, de Blasio’s plan excludes employees of small businesses with gross incomes of less than \$3 million annually. We would like to see the \$13.13 rate increase be applied universally in the city and encourage city lawmakers to lobby state lawmakers for the authority to do so. Assembly bill 8343, for example, would accelerate these approved increases and would link both the minimum wage and the tip-wage to the rate of inflation by December 2016. This would be a tremendous feat but would give the disadvantaged a fair shot at rising above poverty and moving into the middle class

⁷New York City Estimated Food Stamp Participation Rates: 2006-2010.



Conclusion

In conclusion, if we are to address hunger in this New York City, it is imperative to include the broader issue of poverty into the conversation. In order to reverse the cycle of generational poverty, the diverse and valuable organizations that exist today and others who are in the fight to reducing hunger and poverty in New York City should continue to advocate for the following: increasing the minimum wage and adjusting it to inflation; maximizing client participation in federal and state safety net programs, and allowing no child or young adult go hungry in the classroom.

Again, I wish to thank Councilmember Levin, his staff, and the Committee for the opportunity to comment on this important issue. I also wish to thank HRA on its commitment to alleviate poverty in New York City. We applaud HRA's initiatives to better coordinate and streamline the access points to receiving public benefits and services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Stettner".

Andrew Stettner
Chief Program Officer
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Testimony of The Legal Aid Society
Sumani Lanka, Staff Attorney

**CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT HEARING:
HUNGER IN NEW YORK CITY
NOVEMBER 24, 2014**

Good morning. My name is Sumani Lanka, and I am a staff attorney in the Law Reform Unit at the Legal Aid Society in New York City focusing on assisting clients with various public benefits and welfare issues. We appreciate the opportunity to come before you today to testify on the issue of hunger in New York City, more specifically on the barriers that our clients still face in accessing Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (“SNAP”) benefits, formerly known as Food Stamps.

The Legal Aid Society, the nation’s oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, is more than a law firm for low-income families and individuals who cannot afford to pay for counsel. It is an indispensable component of the legal, social and economic fabric of New York City – passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform. The Society has performed this role in City, State and federal courts since 1876. With its annual caseload of more than 300,000 legal matters, the Society takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States, and it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession. The Society’s law reform representation for clients also benefits some two million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a national impact. The Legal Aid Society

does this with a full-time staff of more than 1,800, including more than 1,100 Legal Aid Society lawyers working with nearly 700 social workers, investigators, paralegals and support and administrative staff through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in New York City. The Society's legal program operates three major practices — Civil, Criminal and Juvenile Rights — and receives volunteer help from law firms, corporate law departments and expert consultants that is coordinated by the Society's Pro Bono program.

The Society's Civil Practice provides comprehensive legal assistance in legal matters involving housing, foreclosure and homelessness; family law and domestic violence; income and economic security assistance (such as unemployment insurance benefits, federal disability benefits, food stamps, and public assistance); health law; immigration; HIV/AIDS and chronic diseases; elder law for senior citizens; low-wage worker problems; tax law for low-income workers; consumer law; education law; community development opportunities to help clients move out of poverty; and reentry and reintegration matters for clients returning to the community from correctional facilities. Typically, clients seek assistance from the Civil Practice after exhausting all other avenues for assistance. The Society's Civil Practice is the safety net when all other safety nets fail. During the past year, our Civil Practice worked on more than 46,000 individual cases and legal matters, benefiting nearly 116,000 low-income children and adults. Through our Public Benefits practice, we represent a large number of clients who are forced to rely upon public assistance to get through difficult times that are often caused by a change of circumstances, such as unemployment, disabling medical and mental health conditions, domestic violence, homelessness or even the need for child care. We also provide legal services to thousands of low-wage workers each year through our Employment Law Unit, working to ensure these workers receive fair wages, fair treatment, decent working conditions, and the benefits to

which they are entitled if they lose their jobs. The Society wins over 90 percent of the cases that go to court or administrative hearings.

The benefits the New York City Human Resource Administration (“HRA”) administers – Cash Assistance, SNAP and Medicaid – are critical to our clients and to all New Yorkers who appreciate the importance of a strong social safety net. In the short-term, our clients turn to public assistance as a stop-gap in order to survive: to keep a roof over their heads or end a period of homelessness, and to feed their children. In the long-term, our clients seek a path to a more stable income: by finding a decent job that pays a living wage, seeking education, training or employment to build the skills to get decent jobs, or securing disability benefits for those who are disabled and unable to work.

Based on our experiences and the current economic crisis, we urge the City Council to support and adopt policies that protect and strengthen food resources for individuals and families in need of such basic assistance. The New York City Human Resource Administration (“HRA”) has already implemented tremendous changes towards that effort.

Notably, in May 2014, HRA followed the direction of the other social services districts in New York State and 43 other states by accepting the federal SNAP waiver for adults without dependents, also referred to as Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (“ABAWD”). As a result, underemployed or unemployed ABAWDS will not lose their SNAP benefits due to stringent work requirements and could instead focus on finding permanent, stable employment without fear of going hungry. HRA has further increased the agency’s efforts at ensuring that eligible New Yorkers are able to receive SNAP benefits. For example, HRA implemented a telephone system for appointment reminder calls for SNAP recipients, allowing them to reschedule appointments if necessary. These reminder calls have enabled more recipients to be

able to attend SNAP appointments, thereby reducing the imposition of needless sanctions. In addition, in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, HRA applied for and administered an emergency disaster SNAP program (“DSNAP”) to help ensure that New Yorkers had access to food resources after the devastating storm. Based on lessons learned from the DSNAP program, and after the litigation brought by The Legal Aid Society and pro bono counsel Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP in *Toney-Dick, et. al. v. Doar, et. al.*, new policies have been created at the local, state, and federal level to improve access to DSNAP benefits by individuals with disabilities.

Despite these significant developments, the numbers of individuals and families needing food assistance in New York City are rising and increased SNAP participation is necessary to combat poverty and hunger and ensure survival in New York City, especially during this holiday season. Today, we will briefly focus on some additional ways in which the City could increase participation in the SNAP program.

Expand Data Matching

We urge the City Council to support the use of data matching among government agency programs in order to streamline the SNAP eligibility determination process. In the past, as a result of a City-Council initiative, the City data matched individuals who were receiving Medicaid but not SNAP in order to identify thousands of individuals who were likely eligible for SNAP because of similar eligibility criteria. This type of data matching should be refined, expanded and replicated on a regular basis to allow HRA to quickly and easily identify those individuals who may be eligible for SNAP. Targeted outreach would reduce the administrative burden and costs of collecting and verifying information that is already known to another agency, which would simplify the SNAP eligibility process. This is an effective and important

step for the City in increasing SNAP access to a population in critical need of such food assistance.

Run a Voluntary SNAP Employment & Training Program

The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (“OTDA”) has issued an administrative guidance – 11-INF-07 (Rev. 6/11) – which allows local districts the option to establish *voluntary* SNAP Employment and Training (“E&T”) programs. In order to eliminate unnecessary SNAP employment-related sanctions, HRA should take advantage of this option and opt to run a voluntary SNAP E&T program. There is no mandated SNAP participation rate, and federal regulations are clear that SNAP E&T programs can be administered either mandatorily or voluntarily. Furthermore, HRA would not be administratively burdened with scheduling numerous conciliations and fair hearings.

By avoiding a large-scale, ineffective, mandatory E&T program, which relies on the use of punitive and ineffective sanctions which deprive needy individuals and families of SNAP benefits, the City has the opportunity to run a voluntary E&T program, targeting and empowering recipients through wide variety of permissible activities, from job search to training to education. Over 90% of all families receiving SNAP benefits are living below or hovering just above the poverty level, and nearly all SNAP households have one or more minor children, or an elderly or disabled adult. SNAP sanctions serve no other purpose but to promote insecurity and deprive households in need of critical food assistance.

Based on our experience working with clients, we have observed first-hand the incredibly high rate in which SNAP sanctions are erroneously imposed. Imposing sanctions not only exacerbates the food insecurity of our clients, but at a cost of \$500 per sanction, makes no

economic sense. The unnecessarily punitive practice of sanctioning SNAP recipients should be eliminated or minimized to the maximum extent allowed for under State and federal law.

Expand Exempt Status Categories for SNAP Employment & Training Program

At minimum, HRA should be encouraged, as set forth in the State's Food Stamps Employment and Training ("FSET") Plan, to expand the categories of individuals beyond those considered categorically exempt from participation in the E&T work requirements under the federal regulations. This could include, for example, homeless individuals, households with more than three children, women in their third trimester of pregnancy, part-time employees who may have scheduling conflicts with program requirements, migrant workers and individuals temporarily laid off from employment who have connections to the workforce. Such an expansion would ensure that the most vulnerable populations will not be subjected to stringent work requirements that could result in loss of food assistance.

Provide Easier Access to SNAP Benefits for Immigrants with Disabilities

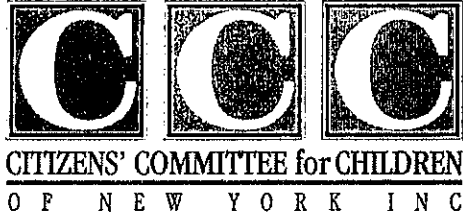
The "five year bar" rule requires that immigrants must wait five-years before being eligible for most federally-funded public benefits, including SNAP. There is an exception to the "five year bar" rule for immigrants suffering from disabilities who receive a disability-based benefit, such as disability-based Medicaid or cash assistance. Despite this rule, most disabled immigrants in New York State who should be eligible to receive SNAP benefits do not receive such benefits because the law provides that a disability determination must be made using the same guidelines as used by the U.S. Social Security Administration ("SSA"). Due to the onerous obstacles of being certified disabled using SSA-level criteria, most immigrants do not qualify for

SNAP, although their disabilities may be severely limiting and they should be able to access such benefits.

Therefore, we ask that the City Council urge the State to adopt policies that would make it easier for needy disabled immigrants to be certified disabled by: (1) changing its policy to allow more disabled immigrants to be placed in a disability-based Medicaid category; and/or (2) providing the equivalent of the State SSI supplement to those immigrants with SSI-level disabilities. An investment of as little as \$23 per month could help make these individuals eligible for nearly \$200 per month in SNAP benefits.

In conclusion, we believe that, through progressive policy change and action, we are one step closer to solving the hunger crisis in New York City. Thank you for this opportunity to present this information based on our experience in providing legal representation for our clients.

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Testimony of

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

Before the
New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare

Oversight – Hunger in NYC

November 24, 2014

Good morning. My name is Louise Feld and I am the Senior Policy Associate at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is a 71-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 Levin and the members of the City Council Committee on General Welfare for holding today's hearing about hunger in New York City.

CCC is grateful to the entire City Council, Mayor de Blasio, and the City Administration for their work to fight poverty and increase New Yorkers' access to healthy, affordable food. We are confident that these efforts will improve health outcomes for New York City's children and families.

It bears noting that the City Council has long been committed to enhancing the food security of New Yorkers. In fact, today's hearing continues the Council's tradition of holding a hunger oversight hearing each November. This hearing highlights the fact that while some New Yorkers prepare to celebrate a bountiful Thanksgiving feast, far too many of their neighbors struggle to put food on the table – now, and throughout the year. The annual hunger hearing underscores this devastating disparity and is testament to the Council's dedication to tackling hunger and food insecurity throughout the City.

Sadly, the need to address hunger has not decreased since last November's hunger oversight hearing. Recent data show that a staggering number of New Yorkers continue to struggle with poverty, food insecurity, and hunger. According to the most recent U.S. Census data, New York City's overall poverty rate is 20.4 percent, which means that one in every five New Yorkers lives in poverty.¹ Even more sobering is the child poverty rate in New York City, which now stands at 29.8 percent, or over half a million children.²

While both poverty and child poverty rates have begun to decrease slightly,³ they remain altogether too high for us to begin celebrating. For the one in five New York City children who lives in a food insecure home and the over one million households across the City that receive SNAP (Food Stamps),⁴ much work remains to be done. Food insecurity and hunger continue to take an immense toll on both the short- and long-term overall well-being of New York City's children. In the immediate, a lack of access to nutritious food has contributed to an obesity rate of 20.7 percent among New York City students in kindergarten through eighth grade.⁵ Poor nutrition impacts children's academic outcomes; it not only effects cognitive and psychosocial development and a child's ability to focus in class, but can also lead to illnesses, which increase school absences.⁶ Further, a poor diet can have lifelong health consequences, such as increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2013.

² *Id.*

³ In 2012, the citywide poverty rate was 21.2 percent and the child poverty rate was 31.4 percent. Keeping Track Online (2014); <http://data.cccnewyork.org/>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Sell, K., Zlotnik, S., Noonan, K., and Rubin, D. (Nov. 2010). The Recession and Food Security. *The Effect of Recession on Child Well-Being*.

We are confident that the City will continue to make the fight against poverty, hunger and food insecurity a top priority. We respectfully ask Mayor de Blasio and the City Council to support and expand those programs that have been proven to assist food insecure families and children. We also urge decision-makers in City government to think creatively about how to fight hunger. In order to achieve these goals, CCC submits the following recommendations to make healthy food more affordable and accessible to all New Yorkers:

1. Increase School Meal options and participation rates

Federally-funded school meal programs are critical resources in the fight against childhood hunger and obesity, as they provide children from low-income families with consistent access to nutritionally sound free or reduced-price meals. About 75 percent of the City's 1.1 million public school students come from families with incomes low enough to qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches,⁷ and thus school meal programs have the potential to impact the food security of a large number of children. Unfortunately, too many children who could benefit from school meal programs do not participate. A number of these children choose not to eat school meals because they do not want others to label them "poor."

We hope that the City will continue to support and expand programs that destigmatize school lunch and breakfast, improve children's nutrition, provide better access to meals throughout the calendar year, and ultimately increase the number of children who eat healthy food through School Meals programming. Such actions would have a positive impact on the health, academic achievement, and overall well-being of many New York City children. To achieve these goals, we hope that the City will:

- **Expand Breakfast After the Bell⁸ programs citywide**

According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), New York City's school breakfast participation rates are repeatedly the poorest among major U.S. cities. Most recently, New York City ranked last in participation out of 63 large school districts across the country. Our consistent last-place showing is particularly abysmal in light of the fact that breakfast is free for all our City's public school children. In CCC's 2012 report entitled *The School Breakfast Program in New York City Public Schools: Results from a Parent Survey Concerning Student Participation*, CCC recommended that programming that provides breakfast in children's classrooms at the start of the school day – Breakfast After the Bell – be instituted in all classrooms citywide. CCC continues to support this recommendation and, as a member of the Powered by Breakfast Coalition, we urge the expansion of Breakfast After the Bell Programming throughout the City.

⁷ According to the federal guidelines, children from families at 130 percent of the federal poverty level qualify for free school meals, while children from families at 185 percent of the federal poverty level qualify for reduced-price meals. Currently in New York City, these categories are used to determine how much the City will be reimbursed for every meal served, rather than what a child will or will not pay in order to receive a meal. Children in New York City public schools do not have to pay for breakfast. Further, in schools where lunch is not free for all, those children who qualify for reduced-price meals are also served meals for free.

⁸ Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) has been the subject of a New York City Council resolution, and a topic of discussion at several Council hearings. It is a type of Breakfast After the Bell programming

Breakfast After the Bell is the best way to increase children's participation in school breakfast because it helps to reduce the barriers that otherwise prevent students from eating breakfast at school. For example, Breakfast After the Bell eliminates the stigma some children associate with receiving a free meal in the cafeteria prior to the beginning of the school day. Breakfast After the Bell also decreases parents' stress, as they would otherwise have to rush their children to school early in the morning, before the school day begins, in order to guarantee that their children eat breakfast in the school cafeteria. Because Breakfast After the Bell helps diminish these obstacles, it results in more children actually eating breakfast, which is critical to their healthy development and ability to succeed in school.

- **Continue to expand the Universal School Meals lunch program so that it is available to every public school student in New York City**

Although New York City's participation rates for school lunch are higher than for school breakfast, they are also low. More than 400,000 New York City public school children do not participate in school lunch, despite the fact that a large number of them are from families with incomes low enough to qualify them for free or reduced-price meals. Like with breakfast, fear of being stigmatized prevents many children, especially teens, from participating. In addition, the current administration of the school lunch program remains burdensome to many parents and school staff; most parents must, each year, fill out an application that requires the disclosure of personal financial information, while in most schools staff must, each day, determine which students do and do not have to pay for their meals.

CCC is a core member of the Lunch 4 Learning campaign, which since the summer of 2013 has sought to make a healthy school lunch free for every New York City public school student. We at CCC and Lunch 4 Learning are incredibly thankful to Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Chair Dromm of the Education Committee, Chair Levin of the General Welfare Committee, and the entire Council not just for their whole-hearted embrace of this idea, but also for their determined efforts to make universal free lunch a reality. The Council's prioritization of universal free school lunch in last June's budget negotiations was instrumental in ultimately bringing free school lunch to all students in stand-alone middle schools.

We were heartened by this great success, but know that many more students – those in elementary and high schools, as well as middle school students in K-8 schools – could benefit from truly universal free school lunch in New York City. We wish to see further expansion of universal free school lunch to all New York City public schools and are confident that the Council will continue to support this goal. We are greatly appreciative of the \$7 million of funding that the City included in this year's budget to fund universal free school lunch in middle schools, but hope to see the total \$20 million of City funding that the campaign estimates is needed to implement universal school lunches citywide. This investment will raise participation, which will in turn increase - by a projected \$59 million - the amount of federal and state reimbursement money the City will receive for serving more meals.

- **Increase participation in the Summer Meals program**

CCC appreciates the Department of Education (DOE) Office of School Food's efforts to feed our City's students nutritious meals during the summer months when school is not in session. We were especially pleased when this past year the DOE released the list of summer feeding sites several weeks prior to the close of the school year. Having the site list available at an earlier date than in previous years helped parents and caretakers plan for their children to receive uninterrupted meal service after the academic year ended. In fact, daily participation rates rose this past summer, as compared with previous years.⁹

Unfortunately, despite the DOE's efforts to make Summer Meals sites convenient and to advertise their locations, too many children who could benefit from this critical program still do not participate. In order to improve participation, CCC respectfully suggests that the City further increase outreach efforts to let parents know about the program, including through the use of additional backpack letters to all parents, especially to those whose children are in summer school classes. We also recommend that the City increase coordination with DYCD, to identify where the DYCD summer camps will be, ensure they are summer feeding sites if appropriate, and inform parents of meal availability before camp starts. Finally, CCC urges the City to identify and advertise feeding site locations even earlier in the spring, and to implement in-classroom meal distribution for summer school students, for both breakfast and lunch.

- **Invest in the Department of Education's capital budget in order to continue to improve school menus**

In recent years, the City has acted to improve the quality of meals served in New York City's public schools. The growth in the number of schools that have salad bars represents one such effort. However, further attempts to institute menu improvements, and ultimately serve higher quality meals, may be challenging, or even impossible, in schools lacking sufficient kitchen equipment. We therefore urge current and future City leaders to determine which school kitchen facilities must be upgraded, and include funding for such improvements in the Department of Education's Capital Budget.

We close this discussion with a recognition that school food is not simply about the meals served to students. For example, school gardens and nutrition education programs help children learn about healthy meals and their larger environment. They are vital components of children's education that should be supported and promoted.

2. Strengthen the anti-hunger safety net in order to maximize participation in food assistance programs

Safety net programs are absolutely vital resources to the large number of New Yorkers who struggle with hunger and food insecurity. Programs such as SNAP and WIC are critical supports that help New Yorkers feed their families and access the nutritious foods that children need for healthy growth and development. Moreover, these programs function as economic engines,

⁹ In previous years, only about 15 percent of eligible children and youth received lunch daily during the summer. This past summer, participation was up 8000 children each day.

bringing federal resources to local supermarkets, corner stores, farmers' markets, and even Green Carts. Research shows that there is \$1.80 of economic activity resulting from every \$1 of SNAP spent. Further, SNAP receipt has been proven to lift a significant number of Americans above the poverty level. In some neighborhoods, such as Mott Haven, East Harlem, and East New York, about 80 percent of households depend on SNAP.¹⁰

We are pleased that the City has continued to employ initiatives that increase the number of eligible New Yorkers who enroll in SNAP. For example, the Medicaid data match has helped identify thousands of New Yorkers who qualify for SNAP. The Council has also provided support to non-profits so that they could conduct SNAP outreach. We hope that the City and Council will continue such efforts, as well as explore creation of similar outreach to WIC-eligible New Yorkers, in order to increase participation in that program.

On a related note, we are grateful that the Council has recognized the beneficial role that farmers' markets and federally-funded food programs play in helping New Yorkers access healthy, local foods. This recognition is evident in the Council's historic support for the use of SNAP at the City's farmers' markets.¹¹ As you are aware, the number of New Yorkers who make SNAP purchases at farmers' markets grows substantially each year, as a result of the DOHMH Health Bucks program and the repeated Council distribution of one-year funds to support EBT technology at the markets. Given the positive impact the ability to use SNAP at farmers' markets has on the food security of New Yorkers and the local economy, we urge the City to ensure all New York City farmers' markets and Green Carts are equipped with EBT technology, and that this funding is baselined in the Executive Budget.

While SNAP benefits are a critical component of ensuring the food security of New Yorkers, there are many hungry New Yorkers who are not eligible to participate in the program and eligible New Yorkers who are not enrolled. Further, federal government cuts to SNAP, which occurred in November 2013, decreased the amount of SNAP benefits that New Yorkers received.¹² As a result of all of these factors, and especially since the federal SNAP cuts went into effect, Emergency Food Providers (EFPs) have experienced a marked increase in the demand for food. In addition, EFPs also saw a substantial growth in visitors preceding the SNAP cuts, as a result of both the recession and Hurricane Sandy.

Given these circumstances, EFPs need more funding so that they can attempt to serve the 1.4 million New Yorkers who seek their help. While we appreciate that the \$1.5 million for EFPs was baselined in the budget, this funding does not address the new needs EFPs are facing. We ask that the City devote greater resources to the Emergency Food Assistance Program, in order to meet the increased demand and cost of food.

¹⁰ Keeping Track Online (2014); <http://data.cccnewyork.org/>.

¹¹ Data from our 2013 report *From Farm to Table: The Use of Federally-Funded Food Programs at New York City Farmers' Markets* show, use of SNAP, the WIC Fruit & Vegetable check, and the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) in our City's farmers' markets positively impacts both the food security of low-income families and the incomes of regional farmers

¹² A household of three lost approximately \$29 per month – more than 20 meals.

3. Expand existing efforts to bring fresh, healthy foods into all New York City neighborhoods, and establish new programming that brings foods into underserved areas

New York City has many communities where residents have limited access to healthy, affordable food. We support the initiatives that aim to increase the presence of healthy and fresh food retail outlets in underserved communities. For example, CCC has long supported the Green Carts program, advocating for its establishment and then producing a report about the first year of its implementation. We are pleased that the number of Green Carts equipped with EBT technology has grown, and hope that the City will explore ways to help Green Cart vendors serve New Yorkers year-round, including through partnerships with CBOs and other agencies, so that vendors can receive more technical assistance in order to acquire food; find more targeted placements, especially near NYCHA facilities; and be housed indoors so that they continue to work and serve their communities during inclement winter months.

CCC also advocated for FRESH at its inception, and we are so pleased that already 18 new and expanding grocery stores have been approved. The City should build upon and learn from the program's successes, using it to upgrade outdated infrastructure at grocery stores in neighborhoods that lack sufficient fresh food retailers. Such upgrades should include efforts to ensure that these retailers, including and especially smaller stores and bodegas, have the capacity to obtain and refrigerate fresh produce, fish, and meats. We also hope that the City will consider additional grants or incentives that would encourage food retailers to improve or further develop their outlets in underserved neighborhoods.

Finally, while we appreciate the potential that FRESH presents for food access in neighborhoods throughout the City, we must also recognize that not every retailer can leverage FRESH, especially during challenging economic times. We therefore urge City decision makers to think creatively about both how to assist smaller retailers in acquiring fresh produce, including exploration of bulk or cooperative purchasing arrangements for groups of small stores, and how to negotiate the Hunts Point market. We also urge the City to explore not only how to get food into underserved neighborhoods, but also how to get residents from underserved neighborhoods to outlets that sell affordable food. For example, we would like to see the exploration of expanded use of shuttle services – bus services linking NYCHA residents and other community members in neighborhoods that are hard to reach via public transportation with food retail outlets, or increased use of mobile markets.

In conclusion, New York City's low-income and working families continue to face substantial challenges in their attempts to feed their children the nutritious and affordable food they need to grow and thrive. Federal programs administered in New York City, as well as local innovations, assist these families in their efforts. We ask that the City consider how to further support and grow the use of programs, so that more children across the five boroughs can benefit.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

McSilver Institute
for Poverty Policy and Research

NYU SILVER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Testimony of **Gary Parker, MSW, Deputy Director**

McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research

before the

New York City Council General Welfare Committee

regarding

Hunger in New York City

November 24, 2014

250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Good morning and thank you Council Member Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research on the topic of hunger in New York City.

Housed in the Silver School of Social Work at New York University, the McSilver Institute oversees applied research studies to address the root causes and consequences of poverty and to inform policy and program solutions. McSilver's work is defined by partnerships with policy makers, service organizations, and community stakeholders both in New York and globally. An understanding of the links between individuals, families, and communities to their external environments, as well as the interrelatedness of race and poverty, guides our efforts.

Food Insecurity

This testimony will focus on the McSilver Institute's projects examining issues related to food insecurity in order to provide an evidence base for family-centered policy and programmatic solutions. Before I describe our research, I'd like to briefly discuss the concept of food insecurity and the data describing how it currently impacts children and families living in New York City.

Food insecurity is a measure of food deprivation defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a "household level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food."¹ Families and individuals are considered food insecure if they have limited or uncertain access to adequate food that is nutritious and safe, or if they have limited or uncertain access to food in ways that are considered socially acceptable². For example a person who must rely on food pantries, steal, or beg for food or funds to purchase food is considered food insecure. Food insecurity is associated with hunger, the physical discomfort of not having enough food to eat.

Food insecurity increased across the U.S. and within New York City following the 2008 economic recession.^{3,4} According to the New York City Coalition Against Hunger's 2013 Hunger Report, in 2010-2012, an estimated average of between 1.3 and 1.4 million New York City residents were food insecure. That number, which represents one in six New Yorkers, includes an estimated average of 406,260 children, or 21.85 percent of the city's children. The coalition notes that it also represents a 200,000 person increase from 2006-2008.⁵ These data were collected prior to the Federal government's approximately \$5 billion cut to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Definitions of Food Security. Accessed November 23, 2014 <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx>

² Life Sciences Research Office, S.A. Andersen, ed. "Core Indicators of Nutritional State for Difficult to Sample Populations," *The Journal of Nutrition* 120:1557S-1600S, 1990.

³ Coleman-Jensen, A., Nord, M., Andrews, Singh, A. (2012). Household Food Security in the United States in 2012, ERR-155, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

⁴ Food Bank for New York City, Fact Sheet: "NYC Hunger Experience 2009: A Year in Recession." Accessed November 23, 2014

<https://www.foodbanknyc.org/files//dmfile/NYCHungerExperience2009FACTSHEET.pdf>

⁵ New York City Coalition Against Hunger, "Superstorm of Hunger., *Lingering Shortfalls Expose A Tale of Two Food Cities*," November 2013.

Program (SNAP), which took effect on November 1, 2013, reducing the benefit for nearly every SNAP household⁶ and putting more New Yorkers at risk of food insecurity.

Correlation between Food Insecurity and Children's Educational Performance

The McSilver Institute recently studied the link between economic hardship, food insecurity and school performance by examining data drawn from the 2011 administration of the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH). The NSCH is a cross-sectional survey sponsored by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration that collects data about the physical and emotional health of a nationally representative sample of children, ages 0-17 years of age.⁷

Our analysis of a subsample of families living under the federal poverty line, including all families that would be eligible for SNAP, found that children in families experiencing severe economic hardship completed less homework, were more likely to miss 11 or more days of school, cared less about doing well in school, and were more likely to repeat a grade. We found that a significant association between family difficulty affording basic necessities – including food—and failing in school persisted, even when holding constant the number of children and adults in the household, single parent household status, and race/ethnicity. However, when families participated in SNAP, McSilver found there was no longer a significant association between difficulty affording basic necessities and repeating a grade⁸

Food insecurity has also been shown to impact mental health and family functioning. Children experiencing severe hunger have been found to have experienced more stressful and traumatic life events when compared to children not experiencing severe hunger. Mothers of children who reported severe hunger were more likely to have a lifetime diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder or substance abuse, and anxiety.⁹

Analyses of the data on food insecurity reveals its devastating impact on children's well-being. Childhood food insecurity is associated with poor health, emotional distress, and mental health challenges.¹⁰ Research has shown that children who are food insecure experience psychosocial difficulties and are less likely to establish and maintain social relationships, particularly in adolescence. And alarmingly, children who are food

⁶ USDA Blog, Helping SNAP Recipients Prepare for November 1st Benefit Changes, October 23, 2013. Accessed November 23, 2014, <http://blogs.usda.gov/2013/10/28/helping-snap-recipients-prepare-for-november-1st-benefit-changes/>

⁷National Survey of Children's Health (2011). Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative.

⁸ McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research, "Food Matters: Supporting Poverty Impacted Children's Educational Success" May 2014

⁹ Weinreb, L., Wehler, C., Perloff, J., Scott, R., Hosmer, D., Sagor, L., Gundersen, C. Hunger: its impact on children's health and mental health. *Pediatrics*. 110(4):e41, 2002 Oct.

¹⁰ Cook, J., & Frank, D. A. (2008). Food insecurity, poverty, and human development in the United States. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1136 (1), 193.

insecure are less engaged in school, score lower in math and reading, and are more likely to be absent and experience school failure.^{11,12,13}

Family and Food Matters – Examining the relationship between care-giver stress, family functioning and food insecurity

In order to fill a gap in the literature and services on the relationship between caregiver stress, family functioning and food insecurity, the McSilver Institute has initiated a program called Family and Food Matters. Researchers from the institute are currently investigating the challenges facing food insecure caregivers in New York and Dutchess counties with children ages five to twelve who use food pantries to supplement their family's nutrition. Reliance on informal sources of support such as food pantries and soup kitchens has become more prevalent in New York City in recent years. Demand increased by 10 percent in 2013, which followed increases of 5 percent in 2012, 12 percent in 2011, 7 percent in 2010, and 29 percent in 2009.¹⁴

The McSilver Institute's research is exploring experiences of food insecure households with children, addressing issues including caregivers' participation and experience in the SNAP program; reasons for lack of participation in the SNAP program among those who are living in food insecure households; the various forms of emergency food services and informal sources of support that families seek to combat food security; the buying, cooking, and eating patterns within families; the areas of overlap between family functioning and food insecurity (e.g. sharing meals together, stress, relationships, etc.); and families' thoughts around family and food security services.

Findings from this study are intended to inform the development of a service curriculum aimed at reducing food insecurity among children and families in New York City that is being devised by the McSilver Institute with partners including City Harvest, the Urban Institute, The West Side Campaign Against Hunger and the New York City Coalition Against Hunger. Data analysis is expected to be completed by January of 2015 and the pilot program informed by the findings is expected to be initiated in the spring of 2015.

Implications for Policy Makers

There are many issues related to New York City's food insecurity crisis that will be discussed at this hearing which should impact the city's policies to eliminate hunger among all its residents going forward. In light of our research focusing on children and families, the McSilver Institute urges the city to 1) immediately implement the mandatory

¹¹ Alaimo, K., Olson, C. M., & Frongillo, E. A. (2001). Food insufficiency and American school-aged children's cognitive, academic, and psychological development. *Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics*, 108(1), 44.

¹² Ashiabi, G. (2005). Household food insecurity and children's school engagement. *Journal of Children and Poverty*, 11 (1), 3,

¹³ Jyoti, D. F., Frongillo, E. A., & Jones, S. J. (2005). Food insecurity affects school children's academic performance, weight gain, and social skills. *The Journal of Nutrition*, 135 (12), 2831.

¹⁴ New York City Coalition Against Hunger, "Superstorm of Hunger.,*Lingering Shortfalls Expose A Tale of Two Food Cities*," November 2013.

provision of free, federally-funded school breakfasts for all public school students in their first-period classrooms; 2) fund a universal free school lunch program and increase funding for informal supports such as food pantries, "pay what you can" community cafes, and soup kitchens; 3) consider the strong implications the association between food insecurity and educational achievement may have for clinical practice as well as prevention efforts in child-serving outpatient clinics 4) seek a greater understanding of the relationship between caregiver stress, family functioning, and food insecurity. 5) increase support services for families who use informal and formal supports, such as food pantries, SNAP and WIC, in order to decrease food insecurity while increasing family functioning.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and your commitment to the welfare of New York City residents.



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Testimony prepared by

Triada Stampas

for the

Committee on General Welfare

on

Hunger in New York City

November 24, 2014

on behalf of

Food Bank For New York City

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon and thank you, Chairperson Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. My name is Triada Stampas and I am the Vice President for Research and Public Affairs at Food Bank For New York City. Food Bank appreciates the opportunity to present testimony today to the City Council about hunger in New York City.

First, Food Bank For New York City thanks the City Council for your continued commitment to addressing the issue of hunger and ensure all New Yorkers have access to affordable, nutritious food. The City Council has long played a leadership role in this arena, and we are pleased to see continued strong leadership on anti-hunger initiatives this past year. The Council's instrumental role in implementing universal free school meals in middle schools, increasing enrollment of eligible households in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), expanding the in-classroom School Breakfast Program, as well as increasing funding for emergency food are especially appreciated. The Council's two citywide food drives this year have helped raise awareness and support about need among our neighbors.

For more than 30 years, Food Bank For New York City has been the city's major hunger-relief organization, working to end food poverty throughout the five boroughs. Nearly one in five New York City residents relies on our programs and services. Through our network of more than 1,000 charities and schools citywide, Food Bank provides food for more than 63 million free meals for New Yorkers in need. Food Bank For New York City's income support services, including SNAP enrollment and free tax assistance for the working poor, put more than \$100 million each year into the pockets of New Yorkers, helping them to afford food and achieve greater dignity and independence. In addition, Food Bank's nutrition education programs and services empower more than 275,000 children, teens and adults to sustain a healthy diet on a low budget. Working toward long-term solutions to food poverty, Food Bank develops policy and conducts research to inform community and government efforts.

My testimony today will focus on hunger in New York City as it is experienced by the emergency food network – the almost one thousand food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and community-based programs that act as the last line of defense against hunger for nearly 1.4 million New York City residents. If poverty and food insecurity rates are any indication, the recovery that began more than five years ago has been barely perceptible to those struggling to make their way up from the bottom rungs of the economic ladder. Food pantries and soup kitchens, already experiencing need beyond the network's capacity, saw more even more people on their lines when SNAP benefits were cut one year ago this month.¹

One year later, these SNAP cuts have deprived low-income New Yorkers of millions of meals, and need for emergency food remains at elevated levels. In the most urgent terms possible, Food Bank calls for a forceful response to our City's hunger crisis, with a coherent and aggressive strategy shared by governmental and nongovernmental players alike.

NEW YORK CITY'S MEAL GAP: 250 MILLION

SNAP is our nation's first line of defense against hunger. A federal entitlement program, SNAP now provides food assistance to 46.5 million Americans.² Available to any household that meets the eligibility criteria (most importantly, income and immigration status), SNAP is *countercyclical*, meaning when the economy shrinks, SNAP has the flexibility to grow to meet rising need.

More than 1.7 million New York City residents (almost one in five) currently rely on SNAP to keep food on the table, with a monthly household benefit that has been averaging approximately \$260 since last November's SNAP cut – a reduction of approximately \$18 per month.³

Despite SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs (like school meals, and the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children, or WIC), **nearly 1.4 million New Yorkers rely on emergency food⁴ – evidence that a meal gap remains.**

¹ "Visitor Traffic Increases at Emergency Food Providers Post-SNAP Cuts." Food Bank For New York City. January 2014.

² United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). July 2014.

³ Food Bank For New York City analysis of SNAP participation and benefit data reported by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) and the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) as of September 2014.

⁴ *Hunger's New Normal: Redefining Emergency in Post-Recession New York City*. Food Bank For New York City. October 2013.

The meal gap represents the translation into meals of the financial resources needed by food-insecure households to secure an adequate diet year-round. Commissioned by Feeding America and based on the federal government's annual food insecurity measure, the meal gap is the most sophisticated food insecurity metric available, enabling sub-county analysis and accounting for variations in local grocery costs. We were pleased to see the meal gap adopted by the Administration as the measure of food insecurity included in the City's annual food metrics report, in compliance with Local Law 133 of 2013. **New York City's meal gap (as of 2012, the most recent year for which data is available) is 250 million meals.**⁵

Emergency food, our last line of defense against hunger, is not sufficient to meet this need. When cash, benefits and the generosity of family and friends have been exhausted, the emergency food network is the resource of last resort for those struggling to keep food on the table. Yet even before SNAP benefits were cut, this network, which relies heavily on unpaid volunteers to do its work, was having a hard time meeting heightened levels of need that persisted past the end of the recession.⁶ Since the start of the recession, 250 food pantries and soup kitchens across the five boroughs have closed their doors, leaving those remaining to confront elevated need.⁷

Given these statistics, it should come as little surprise that the efforts of the emergency food network fall short of completely providing for the needs of food-impooverished New Yorkers. Indeed, **after the last soup kitchen meal is served and the last pantry bag distributed, our city's meal gap remains more than 100 million meals wide.**⁸

THE HUNGER CLIFF, ONE YEAR LATER: >56M MEALS LOST SO FAR

One year ago this month, sweeping cuts to SNAP benefits took effect, the result of an unfulfilled promise by the White House and Congressional leaders to reverse a deal struck in the December 2010 "Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act" to pay for a \$0.06-per-meal increase in federal school lunch reimbursements by reducing household SNAP benefits

The SNAP cuts have resulted in a **loss of more than 56 million meals** for New York City residents in the first 11 months since they took effect.⁹ Food Bank For New York City surveyed its member food pantries and soup kitchens, and found that in the month benefits were reduced, more than three quarters of emergency food programs reported increases in need, and nearly half reported running out of food.¹⁰

Nearly one year later, a follow-up survey finds that four out of five food pantries and soup kitchens continue to see increased visitor traffic, but that food shortages are even more widespread. In September 2014:

⁵ Gunderson, C., E. Engelhard, A. Satoh, & E. Waxman. *Map the Meal Gap 2014: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity at the County Level*. Feeding America, 2014.

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

⁷ *Serving under Stress Post-Recession: The State of Food Pantries & Soup Kitchens Today*. (2012). Food Bank For New York City.

⁸ Food Bank For New York City estimate based on FeedNYC data.

⁹ "The Hunger Cliff, One Year Later: 56 Million Meals Lost; Need for Emergency Food Remains High." Food Bank For New York City. Nov. 2014.

¹⁰ "Visitor Traffic Increases at Emergency Food Providers Post-SNAP Cuts." Food Bank For New York City. January 2014.

- **60 percent of food pantries and soup kitchens reported running out of food**, or particular types of food needed for complete pantry bags or meals – an increase of 12 percentage points from November 2013;
- **37 percent of food pantries and soup kitchens reported having to turn people away** due to food shortages – an increase of 11 percentage points from November 2013; and
- **61 percent of food pantries reported reducing the number of meals provided in their pantry bags** – an increase of 38 percentage points from November 2013.¹¹

These statistics speak to a profound insufficiency of food in the emergency food supply, and the acute operational stress under which food pantries and soup kitchens have been functioning since the cuts. It is likely that the results we found about need at emergency food providers in November 2013 underestimated the true severity of the impact of the SNAP cuts due to two factors: first, November is a month when food donations peak, meaning more food was available at food pantries and soup kitchens than in an average month; and second, a class action settlement that provided retroactive benefits to wrongfully sanctioned households resulted in tens of millions of dollars in additional SNAP benefits issued to New York City residents that month. The survey findings from September 2014, by contrast, reflect neither holiday giving nor other special circumstances

BUDGET AND POLICY STRATEGIES TO CLOSE NYC'S MEAL GAP

Closing our City's meal gap will require a thoughtful and aggressive strategy that uses every resource available. With millions of meals already lost, New York City's anti-hunger resources – primarily those that bolster SNAP enrollment and fortify our emergency food system – will be more vital than ever.

EMERGENCY FOOD

New York City's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) is a major source of food for our city's emergency food network. Because the emergency food system relies heavily on donations, variety, quality and availability of product can vary widely. EFAP plays an especially important role because it provides a steady year-round supply of nutritious food for the approximately 500 food pantries and soup kitchens that participate. EFAP provides food from all five food groups, and all EFAP food meets the City's rigorous nutrition standards. In addition, EFAP is an important source of kosher food.

The now-baselined funding of the City Council initiative that supplemented EFAP by \$1.3 million for food (and \$200,000 for SNAP outreach) represents the first increase to baseline food funding for EFAP since 2009. This baseline increase effectively lifts the value of the program's funding to pre-recession levels, as it is comparable to increases in food costs since 2007.¹² Poverty and food insecurity, however, remain entrenched at high levels, and food pantries continue to fall short of providing the standard nine meals per person in a pantry bag. It is vital to the ability of the emergency food network to address New Yorkers' immediate food needs to ensure that EFAP's food dollars are spent in a way that maximizes their purchasing power.

¹¹ "The Hunger Cliff, One Year Later: 56 Million Meals Lost; Need for Emergency Food Remains High." Food Bank For New York City. Nov. 2014.

¹² Food Bank For New York City analysis of Consumer Price Index data for the NY metropolitan area from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Dec. 2007-Oct. 2014.

- We ask that EFAP baseline food funding increase to \$14.4 million in order to account for rising poverty and food costs, as well as adjust for the current inadequacy of the food supply, which only allows food pantries to provide 5.8 meals in a typical pantry bag – far short of New York State's nine-meal standard.

SNAP

While SNAP cuts have reduced the benefit amounts of those already participating, it remains of utmost importance to ensure that eligible New Yorkers who are not enrolled in the program avail themselves of the benefit – particularly emergency food participants. Even at the currently reduced benefit amounts, SNAP benefits provide our city more meals in two months than the entire emergency food system distributes in a year.

- We encourage HRA to take advantage of all available federal waivers and options that increase benefit amounts and reduce the burden on applicants and HRA staff. We applaud HRA for having taken an important step earlier this year in requesting (and receiving) the federal waiver that removes time limits on Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs); we look forward to working with HRA on continuing to improve SNAP access for seniors, students, working parents and others.
- We encourage HRA to ensure SNAP outreach materials are incorporated into outreach for other programs and services targeted to likely eligible populations – like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

SCHOOL MEALS

Maximizing participation in school meals, through adoption of Universal School Meals (USM) and expansion of Breakfast after the Bell, will not only provide hundreds of thousands of New York City children with access to a nutritious breakfast and lunch, it will also help close New York City's meal gap.

New York City now has two federal incentives for providing USM: the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and Provision 2. CEP provides federal reimbursement of school meals in high-need schools determined by a formula indexed to the proportion of students who are categorically eligible for free school meals through their participation in other federal means-tested programs (like SNAP, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, and Medicaid) or because of their status as homeless or in foster care. This is a fully paperless process that entirely does away with the submission and processing of school meals applications – thus reducing administrative resource needs. Last year, CEP was implemented only in District 75 schools.

Provision 2 provides USM on a four- to six-year cycle, with school meals applications required only in the first year of the cycle. While it does not entirely eliminate the administrative burden associated with the forms, it significantly reduces that burden. Provision 2 has been implemented in hundreds of New York City public schools and has been shown to increase school meal participation, most dramatically in participating high schools. Regrettably, the Department of Education has chosen to reduce the number of schools receiving USM through Provision 2 at a time of such high need.

- Food Bank For New York City applauds the City Council for providing funding in the current budget to make USM possible in our city's middle schools. We encourage the City Council to work with the new Administration to develop a plan for expanding USM beyond middle

schools, while using CEP and Provision 2 to maximize federal reimbursements and minimize cost to the city.

New York City's public schools have offered universal, free school breakfast since 2004. The breakfast period is scheduled 30 minutes before the start of the school day. Unfortunately, the inconvenience of the program and the stigma associated with participation – the only children in the cafeteria before the start of the school day are those whose parents could not provide them a breakfast at home – conspire to keep participation low. Indeed, in a survey of large school districts, New York City most recently ranked 55th of 57 in school breakfast participation among low-income students.¹³

Breakfast after the Bell allows schools to adopt practices that reduce stigma and increase participation: whether through Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC); “grab-and-go” breakfast; and/or making cafeteria breakfast available through first period. In New York City, BIC is a principal's decision, and while more than 300 schools offer it in at least one classroom, few offer it schoolwide.

- We encourage the Council to work with the Department of Education to make BIC an opt-out, rather than an opt-in, program for schools.
- Recognizing that some schools may need facilities improvements in order to accommodate program necessities and anticipated growth in participation associated with USM and BIC, we encourage the Council to work with the Administration to fund those capital needs.

SUMMER MEALS

The federal Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), commonly known as Summer Meals, provides free lunch and breakfast to children up to (and including) age 18 during the summer months when access to school meals is lost. Summer meals are available at certain schools, as well as at other community-based locations, including parks, pools, playgrounds, libraries and emergency food programs. While New York City's participation rates are higher than the national average, they remain woefully low relative to participation in school meals – summer meals participation is less than 30 percent of the participation of free and reduced-price eligible children in the school meals program.¹⁴ Tellingly, among those households that use emergency food programs and have school-aged children, SFSP participation is little different from the city's participation rate overall.¹⁵ There are clearly opportunities to increase participation and help shrink our city's meal gap.

- We encourage the City Council to work with the Administration to identify appropriate school and non-school sites to act as summer meals sites, as well as to encourage your constituents to take advantage of the availability of free meals for children throughout the summer.
- We welcome collaboration to leverage the reach of the emergency food network to connect families that rely on food pantries and soup kitchens to nearby SFSP sites.

¹³ *School Breakfast: Making It Work in Large Districts, School Year 2012-2013*. Food Research and Action Center. Jan. 2014.

¹⁴ *Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report 2014*. Food Research and Action Center. Jun. 2014.

¹⁵ *Hunger's New Normal: Redefining Emergency in Post-Recession New York City*. Food Bank For New York City. 2013.

INCOME SUPPORT & POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAMS

Approximately one in five adults on food pantry and soup kitchen lines is working.¹⁶ Recognizing that there is no surer way off a food pantry or soup kitchen line than a living wage job, there is much our city can do to support working New Yorkers who are earning too little to afford needed food.

- We urge the City Council to work with the Office of Financial Empowerment in the Department of Consumer Affairs to expand free tax preparation services available to low-income New Yorkers throughout our city. Approximately 20 percent of tax filers eligible for the EITC in New York fail to claim it, and the high-quality free tax assistance services available throughout our city can ensure low-income New Yorkers receive every refund and credit to which they are entitled.
- We encourage the City Council to work with State lawmakers to raise the minimum wage during this legislative session so that full-time workers can be assured of their ability to afford food.

CONCLUSIONS

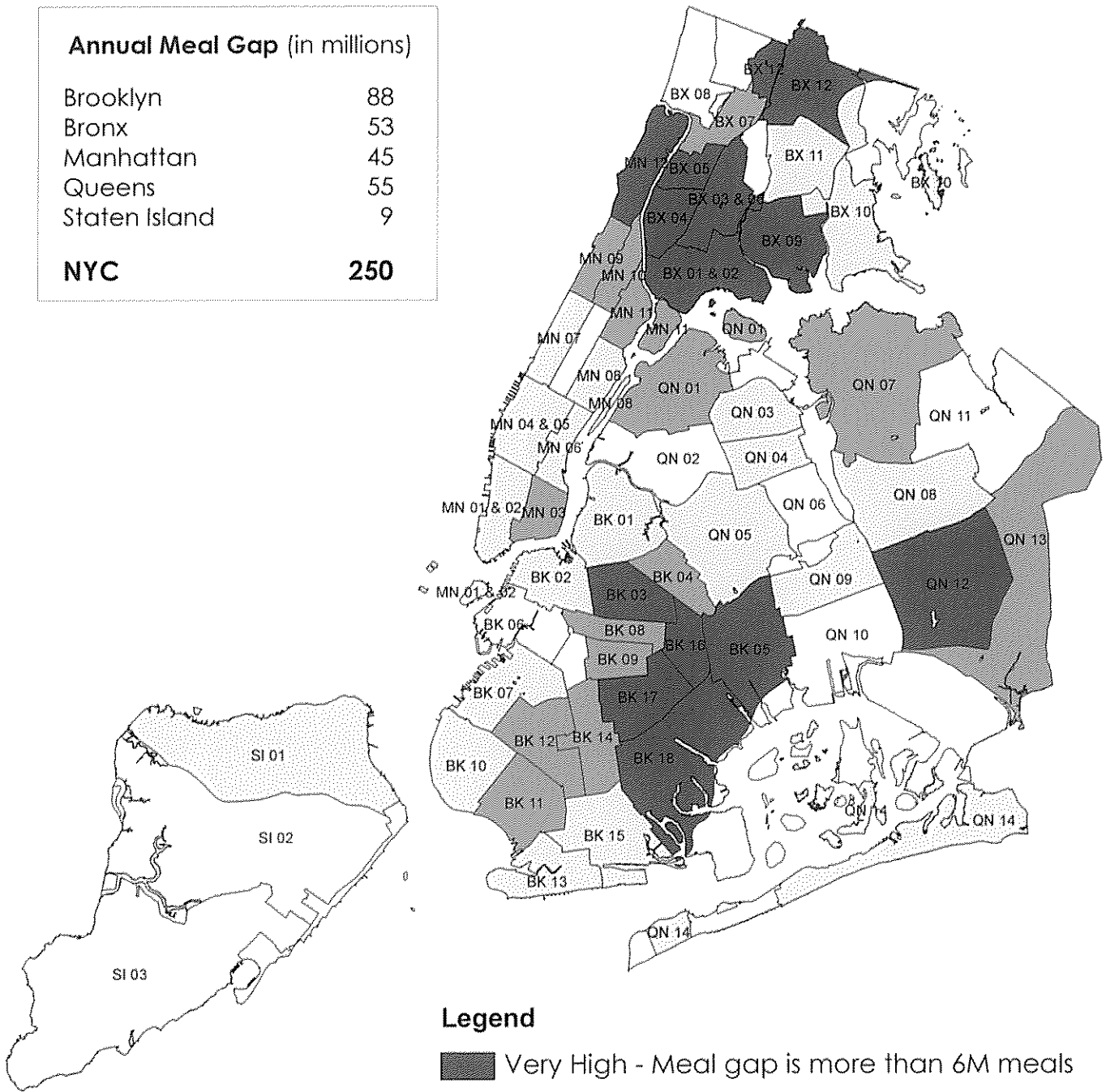
Cuts to SNAP have had profound repercussions for low-income New Yorkers already struggling to put food on the table. With SNAP benefits reduced, these cuts have placed new demands on front-line services supported by State and City funding. Recognizing the needs of this moment, the Administration and City Council must work together to marshal our city's resources wisely to alleviate the hunger and hardship imposed by Washington's unfulfilled promises. As a city, this is a responsibility we share. The 1.4 million New Yorkers who find themselves turning to food pantries and soup kitchens for needed food deserve no less.

¹⁶ *Hunger's New Normal: Redefining Emergency in Post-Recession New York City*. Food Bank For New York City. 2013.

Meal Gap by Community District

Annual Meal Gap (in millions)

Brooklyn	88
Bronx	53
Manhattan	45
Queens	55
Staten Island	9
NYC	250



Legend

- Very High - Meal gap is more than 6M meals
- High - Meal gap is 4.5-6M meals
- Medium - Meal gap is 3-4.5M meals
- Low - Meal gap is below 3M meals

Source: Food Bank For New York City analysis of Gundersen, C., E. Engelhard, A. Satoh, & E. Waxman. Map the Meal Gap 2014: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level. Feeding America, 2014.

New York City's Meal Gap by Borough and Community

PUMA (Public Use Microdata Area)	Food Insecurity Rate	Meal Gap
BRONX		
Community District 3 & 6--Belmont, Crotona Park East & East Tremont	27%	7,552,263
Community District 1 & 2--Hunts Point, Longwood & Melrose	26%	7,016,611
Community District 5--Morris Heights, Fordham South & Mount Hope	27%	6,293,361
Community District 4--Concourse, Highbridge & Mount Eden	25%	6,169,139
Community District 9--Castle Hill, Clason Point & Parkchester	19%	6,120,933
Community District 12--Wakefield, Williamsbridge & Woodlawn	24%	6,056,245
Community District 7--Bedford Park, Fordham North & Norwood	22%	4,774,531
Community District 11--Pelham Parkway, Morris Park & Laconia	18%	3,930,026
Community District 10--Co-op City, Pelham Bay & Schuylerville	15%	3,045,671
Community District 8--Riverdale, Fieldston & Kingsbridge	15%	2,815,584
BROOKLYN		
Community District 5--East New York & Starrett City	24%	6,372,279
Community District 3--Bedford-Stuyvesant	27%	6,353,787
Community District 18--Canarsie & Flatlands	18%	6,332,043
Community District 16--Brownsville & Ocean Hill	31%	6,252,176
Community District 17--East Flatbush, Farragut & Rugby	25%	6,077,495
Community District 14--Flatbush & Midwood	21%	5,729,884
Community District 8--Crown Heights North & Prospect Heights	26%	5,572,643
Community District 9--Crown Heights South, Prospect Lefferts & Wingate	28%	5,500,676
Community District 12--Borough Park, Kensington & Ocean Parkway	18%	5,074,588
Community District 11--Bensonhurst & Bath Beach	15%	4,770,935
Community District 4--Bushwick	20%	4,612,234
Community District 1--Greenpoint & Williamsburg	18%	4,473,881
Community District 7--Sunset Park & Windsor Terrace	17%	4,355,595
Community District 2--Brooklyn Heights & Fort Greene	18%	3,860,880
Community District 13--Brighton Beach & Coney Island	20%	3,688,754
Community District 15--Sheepshead Bay, Gerritsen Beach & Homecrest	14%	3,491,434
Community District 10--Bay Ridge & Dyker Heights	14%	3,162,481
Community District 6--Park Slope, Carroll Gardens & Red Hook	13%	2,476,748

Source: Food Bank For New York City analysis of Gundersen, C., E. Engelhard, A. Satoh, & E. Waxman. *Map the Meal Gap 2014: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level*. Feeding America, 2014.

New York City's Meal Gap by Borough and Community

PUMA (Public Use Microdata Area)	Food Insecurity Rate	Meal Gap
MANHATTAN		
Community District 12--Washington Heights, Inwood & Marble Hill	19%	7,095,592
Community District 10--Central Harlem	27%	5,883,104
Community District 3--Chinatown & Lower East Side	19%	5,474,989
Community District 11--East Harlem	23%	4,965,776
Community District 9--Hamilton Heights, Manhattanville & West Harlem	20%	4,587,982
Community District 7--Upper West Side & West Side	12%	4,254,500
Community District 8--Upper East Side	11%	4,235,389
Community District 4 & 5--Chelsea, Clinton & Midtown Business District	15%	3,566,576
Community District 6--Murray Hill, Gramercy & Stuyvesant Town	12%	3,141,519
Community District 1 & 2--Battery Park City, Greenwich Village & Soho	12%	3,041,843
QUEENS		
Community District 12--Jamaica, Hollis & St. Albans	22%	8,433,639
Community District 7--Flushing, Murray Hill & Whitestone	13%	5,813,568
Community District 13--Queens Village, Cambria Heights & Rosedale	15%	5,069,417
Community District 1--Astoria & Long Island City	17%	4,953,217
Community District 14--Far Rockaway, Breezy Point & Broad Channel	20%	3,984,438
Community District 3--Jackson Heights & North Corona	13%	3,913,388
Community District 8--Briarwood, Fresh Meadows & Hillcrest	15%	3,863,023
Community District 4--Elmhurst & South Corona	14%	3,487,699
Community District 5--Ridgewood, Glendale & Middle Village	12%	3,433,215
Community District 9--Richmond Hill & Woodhaven	13%	3,393,088
Community District 2--Sunnyside & Woodside	13%	2,961,271
Community District 10--Howard Beach & Ozone Park	12%	2,732,320
Community District 6--Forest Hills & Rego Park	12%	2,301,607
Community District 11--Bayside, Douglaston & Little Neck	9%	1,829,994
STATEN ISLAND		
Community District 1--Port Richmond, Stapleton & Mariner's Harbor	14%	4,237,335
Community District 2--New Springville & South Beach	8%	1,897,753
Community District 3--Tottenville, Great Kills & Annadale	7%	1,856,733

Source: Food Bank For New York City analysis of Gundersen, C., E. Engelhard, A. Satoh, & E. Waxman. *Map the Meal Gap 2014: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level*. Feeding America, 2014.

Leverage and Fortify the Emergency Food System

- Increase NYC's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) baseline funding to a Fiscal Year 2016 funding level of \$14.4 million to account for increased need.
- Enact a policy of cost-neutral preferencing of kosher and halal products.
- Continue improvements to food quality by offering more minimally processed and fresh food, and by giving programs choice over food selection.

Strengthen, Streamline and Simplify SNAP

- Maximize all federal options and waivers that lower barriers to participation and simplify program administration.
- Develop a comprehensive citywide SNAP outreach plan that leverages all available funding sources of federal matching dollars.
- Simplify and fully implement online SNAP application and recertification processes.
- Coordinate SNAP outreach and application with other benefits and services that reach low-income populations, like emergency food programs and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites.
- Continue expansion of community-based sites for application submission.
- Improve SNAP administration, placing priority on the customer service experience.
- Use clear language for SNAP notices, avoiding messages that discourage participation.

Expand Access to School and Summer Meals

- Implement universal school meals (USM) in all schools, using available options to maximize federal reimbursements.
- Make Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) an opt-out rather than opt-in program for schools.
- Fund capital improvements to school cafeterias to ensure infrastructure and capacity for full implementation of USM and BIC.
- Increase the number of Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sites open for the entire duration of summer recess.
- Ensure neighborhood access to open SFSP sites in all high-need areas of the city.
- Ensure that the Department of Education publicizes the SFSP program before the end of the school year.
- Engage the reach and capacity of the emergency food network in promoting school and summer meals.

Tackle Poverty to End Hunger

- Enhance the City's Earned Income Tax Credit.
- Expand funding of free tax service programs for low-income New Yorkers.
- Promote policies that support a living wage with access to medical benefits and paid time off, and that make living-wage jobs more accessible to low-income people.
- Develop job creation, training and education strategies that are geared toward poverty reduction.
- Invest in economic development that both enhances the nutrition landscape and provides opportunities for employment in low-income communities.

Leverage and Fortify the Emergency Food System

- Maintain dedicated, line-item funding for the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) in the State budget, and increase baseline funding to a Fiscal Year 2016 funding level of \$51 million to adjust for rising food costs and increased need.
- Increase funding for administrative and operational support.

Strengthen, Streamline and Simplify SNAP

- Maximize all federal waivers that lower barriers to participation and simplify program administration.
- Restore eligibility for all documented immigrants.
- Develop a comprehensive state SNAP outreach plan that leverages all available funding sources for federal matching dollars.
- Coordinate among multiple benefits so that New Yorkers can apply for several programs and services simultaneously.
- Leverage the health insurance exchange platform to enable screening for SNAP and other programs.
- Expand educational programs and job readiness opportunities covered under SNAP Education and Training.

Expand Access to School and Summer Meals

- Provide funding to help offset any startup costs associated with schools undertaking or expanding USM and/or BIC.
- Provide incentives for schools to increase the number of nutritious meals prepared on-site.
- Ensure that the Education Department publicizes SFSP before the end of the school year.

- Encourage participation in SFSP by New York State park sites.

Protect and Strengthen WIC

- Ensure access to a WIC site in every low-income neighborhood in New York.
- Reject any cuts to State WIC funds, and any proposals that would require WIC to compete with other nutrition assistance programs for funding.
- Promote referrals of eligible WIC participants to SNAP.
- Expedite the transition from WIC coupons to EBT.
- Promote deeper collaboration between the New York State Department of Health and county/municipal social service agencies to provide SNAP outreach and enrollment opportunities at all WIC sites.

Expand Access to Nutritious Food

- Increase farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects in low-income communities.
- Adopt transportation policies that would facilitate access to local food and make nutritious local food more affordable.

Tackle Poverty to End Hunger

- Enhance the State's EITC.
- Eliminate the use of discriminatory auditing practices for low-income, cash-earning EITC claimants, and implement transparent documentation requirements and auditing practices for EITC claimants.
- Allow New Yorkers to designate all or part of their tax refunds to directly open and fund a 529 college savings account.
- Increase the State minimum wage, and index it to inflation.
- Promote policies that support a living wage with access to medical benefits and paid time off, and that make living-wage jobs more accessible to low-income people.
- Adopt policies that make living wage jobs more accessible to low-income people.
- Develop job creation, training and education strategies that are geared toward poverty reduction.
- Continue to invest in economic development that both enhances the nutrition landscape and provides opportunities for employment in low-income communities.

Leverage and Fortify the Emergency Food System

- Appropriate the full authorized amount of funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), including for Storage & Distribution expenses.
- Reverse sequestration cuts to the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP).

Strengthen, Streamline and Simplify SNAP

- Reject any cuts to SNAP, or any changes to its entitlement status.
- Restore the ARRA benefit reduction that took effect in November 2013.
- Restore eligibility to all documented immigrants.
- Coordinate among multiple federal benefits to allow individuals to apply for all simultaneously.

Expand Access to School and Summer Meals

- Reject any effort to pay for enhancements to child nutrition programs by cutting funding to SNAP or other nutrition assistance programs
- Promote federal incentives to provide universal, free school lunch in schools.
- Expand area eligibility requirements for open SFSP sites.
- Provide increased funding for meal reimbursements.

Protect and Strengthen WIC

- Reverse sequestration cuts to WIC.
- Provide USDA with more funding for WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons.

Tackle Poverty to End Hunger

- Enhance the Earned Income Tax Credit.
- Expand funding of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.
- Raise the federal minimum wage, and index it to inflation.
- Promote policies that support a living wage with access to medical benefits and paid time off, and that make living wage jobs more accessible to low-income people.
- Develop job creation, training and education strategies that are geared toward poverty reduction.

Research Brief

THE HUNGER CLIFF ONE YEAR LATER:

**56 million meals lost and need for
emergency food remains high**



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Food Bank For New York City thanks its members for the time and effort they devoted to participate in this research.

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ABOUT FOOD BANK FOR NEW YORK CITY

Food Bank For New York City has been the city's major hunger-relief organization working to end hunger throughout the five boroughs for more than 30 years. Nearly one in five New Yorkers relies on Food Bank for food and other resources. Food Bank takes a strategic, multifaceted approach that provides meals and builds capacity in the neediest communities, while raising awareness and engagement among all New Yorkers. Through its network of more than 1,000 charities and schools citywide, Food Bank provides food for more than 63 million free meals for New Yorkers in need. Food Bank For New York City's income support services, including food stamps (also known as SNAP) and free tax assistance for the working poor, put more than \$100 million each year into the pockets of New Yorkers, helping them to afford food and achieve greater dignity and independence. In addition, Food Bank's nutrition education programs and services empower more than 275,000 children, teens and adults to sustain a healthy diet on a low budget. Working toward long-term solutions to food poverty, Food Bank develops policy and conducts research to inform community and government efforts. Learn how you can help at foodbanknyc.org.

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Introduction

Nearly 1.8 million New York City residents (approximately one in five) rely on the nation's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps). When across-the-board cuts to SNAP benefits went into effect on November 1, 2013, more than a million households in New York City lost, on average, nearly \$18 per month in benefits.¹ The food pantries and soup kitchens in Food Bank For New York City's citywide network reported immediate and widespread increases in visitor traffic that month.

Hunger in NYC

- Almost 1.8 million New Yorkers rely on SNAP (food stamps).
- Nearly 1.4 million New Yorkers rely on emergency food for basic nutrition.
- NYC's meal gap – the shortfall that 1.4 million food-insecure New Yorkers face in a year – is 250 million meals.

Nearly one year later, has this increased need been sustained, or was it a one-time phenomenon? To answer this question, Food Bank issued a follow-up survey to food pantries and soup kitchens across the five boroughs about client demand at their sites in September 2014, compared to September 2013 (two months prior to the cuts). The findings presented in this research brief provide a snapshot into the need that continues to confront New York City's emergency food network since those sweeping cuts to SNAP took effect.

The Hunger Cliff: More than 56 Million Meals Lost – and Counting

The SNAP cuts that took place on November 1, 2013 were legislated by Congress in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, as a tradeoff to pay for a six-cents-per-meal increase in federal school lunch reimbursements.² For the first time in the history of the program, all recipients saw their benefits reduced.³ Note that more than one in three SNAP households in New York State have children, and close to one third include someone who is elderly.⁴

What is the Meal Gap?

The Meal Gap represents the meals missing from the homes of families and individuals struggling with food insecurity (the lack of sufficient money or other resources to secure adequate, nutritious food year-round for all household members).

Factors like poverty and local food costs determine how big a city's meal gap is.

So far, these cuts have resulted in an 11-month loss of more than 56 million meals in New York City alone – more food than most food banks across the country distribute in a year.⁵

Even before SNAP benefits were cut, food-insecure New Yorkers were facing an annual shortfall of 250 million meals in 2012.⁶ Emergency food programs like food pantries and soup kitchens, approximately 800 of which currently serve the five boroughs as part of Food Bank For New York City's network, work to fill this meal gap, but current distribution falls more than 100 million meals short of the need.

¹ Food Bank For New York City analysis of reported SNAP participation and benefit data by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and the New York City Human Resources Administration.

² Public Law 111-296.

³ "November 1 SNAP Cuts Will Affect Millions of Children, Seniors and People with Disabilities." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. October 24, 2013.

⁴ *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2012*. United States Department of Agriculture. February 2014.

⁵ Food Bank For New York City analysis of reported SNAP participation and benefit data by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and the New York City Human Resources Administration.

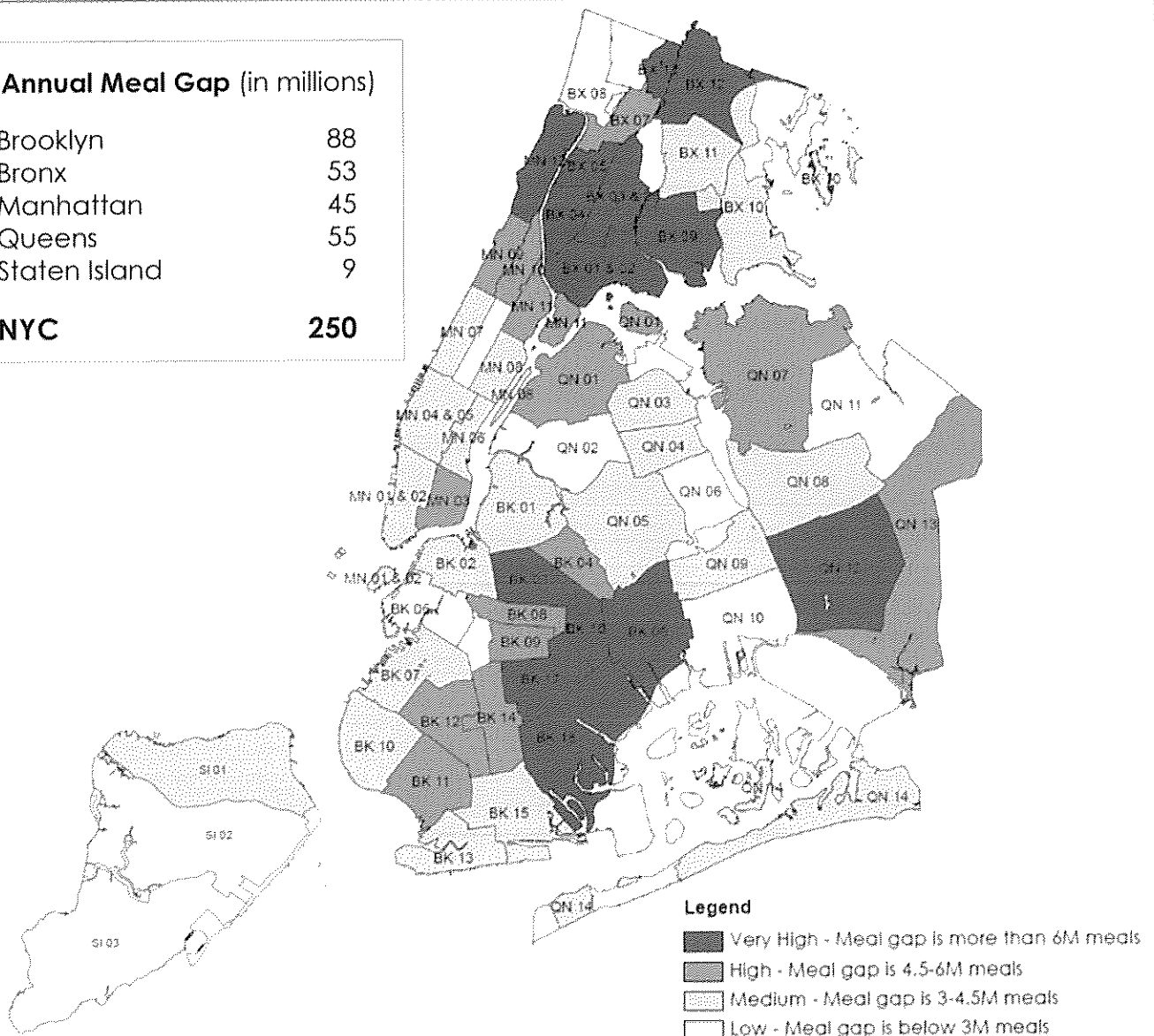
⁶ Gundersen, C., Engelhard, E., Satoh, A., & Waxman E. *Map the Meal Gap 2014: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity at the County Level*. Feeding America, 2014.

Meal Gap by Community District

Annual Meal Gap (in millions)

Brooklyn	88
Bronx	53
Manhattan	45
Queens	55
Staten Island	9

NYC **250**



Source: Food Bank For New York City analysis of Gundersen, C., E. Engelhardt, A. Salah, & E. Waxman. Map the Meal Gap 2014: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level. Feeding America, 2014.

Because SNAP benefits are often exhausted before the end of the month – particularly in New York City, where food costs are higher than average – SNAP recipients are among those who turn to emergency food providers for needed food. Indeed, even before benefits were reduced, more than 40 percent of SNAP recipients in New York City were utilizing food pantries and soup kitchens to help keep food on the table.⁷

Since the Great Recession of 2007, New York City's food pantries and soup kitchens have struggled to meet increased need with diminished resources. The five years between 2007 and 2012 saw New York City's emergency food network shrink by 25 percent – a loss of nearly 250 food pantries and soup kitchens – with remaining programs trying to fill the gaps.⁸ It is within this already grave deficit of food and support infrastructure that SNAP cuts took place.

⁷ Hunger's New Normal: Redefining Emergency in Post-Recession New York City. Food Bank for New York City, 2013.

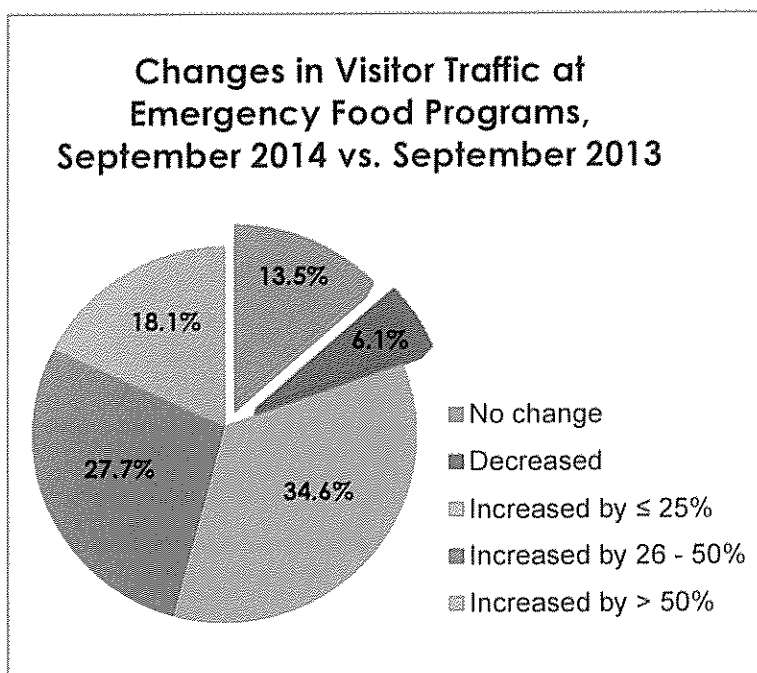
⁸ Serving Under Stress Post-Recession: The State of Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens Today. Food Bank For New York City, 2012.

Findings

More than three-quarters (80 percent) of food pantries and soup kitchens surveyed reported an increase in the number of visitors in September 2014, compared to September 2013.

- 34.6 percent reported an increase of 25 percent or less;
- 27.7 percent reported an increase between 26 percent and 50 percent; and
- 18.1 percent reported an increase of more than 50 percent.

These increases are comparable to the increases in visitor traffic reported by food pantries and soup kitchens in November 2013, as compared to the immediately preceding months (September/October 2013).



Three in five (60 percent) food pantries and soup kitchens reported that they had run out of food, or particular types of food, needed to make adequate meals or pantry bags in September 2014.

This is an increase of 12 percentage points from the 48 percent of food pantries and soup kitchens reporting these shortages during the month of November 2013.

Nearly two in five (37 percent) food pantries and soup kitchens reported that they had turned people away during the month of September 2014 because they had run out of food, or particular types of food required to make adequate meals or pantry bags.

This is an increase of 11 percentage points from the 26 percent of food pantries and soup kitchens that reported turning people away due to such food shortages during the month of November 2013.

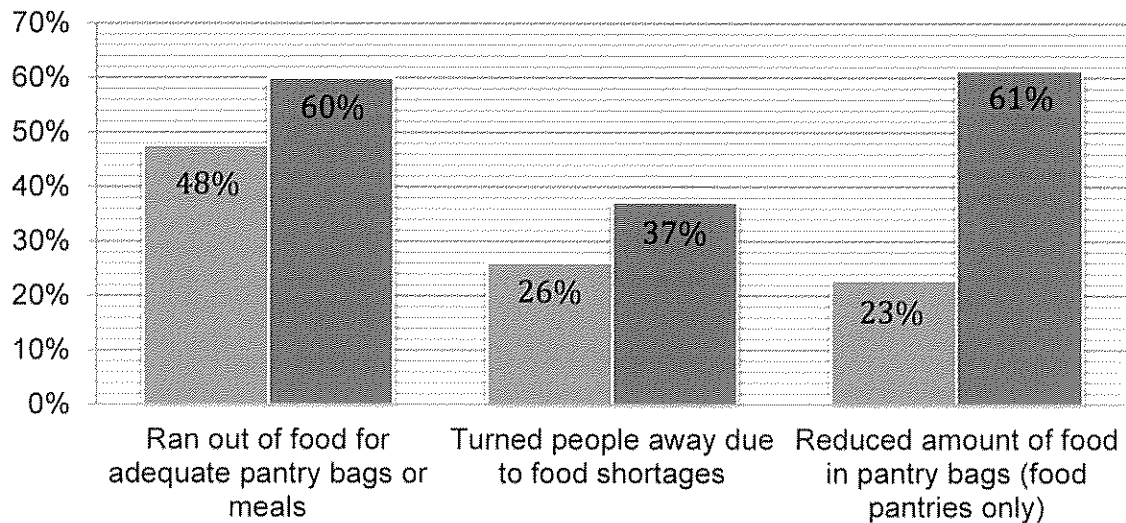
More than three in five (61 percent) food pantries reported reducing the number of meals in their pantry bags during the month of September 2014 because they had run out of food, or particular types of food.

This is an increase of 38 percentage points from the 23 percent of food pantries that reported reducing the number of meals in their pantry bags due to such food shortages during the month of November 2013.

Food Shortages in NYC's Emergency Food Network

■ November 2013 ■ September 2014

Percentage of Food Pantries & Soup Kitchens



Conclusions

While the increases in visitors reported in November 2013 at emergency food providers were dramatic, these findings show that elevated need in the wake of the Hunger Cliff has remained. Moreover, these findings likely paint a truer picture of the emergency food network's challenges in addressing this need than the results from November 2013, as November is a month when donations to the emergency food network are unusually high. In addition, a class action settlement in November 2013 that provided retroactive benefits to wrongfully sanctioned households resulted in tens of millions of dollars in additional SNAP benefits issued to New York City residents that month. The survey findings from September 2014, by contrast, reflect neither holiday giving nor other special circumstances.

Although survey results do not specifically indicate the kind of visitors driving the increases demonstrated, the SNAP cuts that took effect on November 1, 2013 continue to represent the biggest systemic factor reducing the food purchasing power of low-income people – indeed, other factors that meaningfully affect emergency food program participation, like local unemployment, have continued to decrease since November 2013⁹ – making it likely that SNAP recipients experiencing a reduction in benefits are responsible for the increases seen.

The operational stress that emergency food providers continue to experience as a result of this need is reflected in the higher percentages of food pantries and soup kitchens reporting that they had run out of food for adequate meals or pantry bags or that they had to turn people away because they had run out of food in September 2014. In the same month, approximately three in five food pantries reported that they had to reduce the amount of food in their pantry bags because they had run out of food.

⁹ Food Bank For New York City analysis of New York State Department of Labor data through September 2014.

Policy Implications

Fortifying our emergency food system – the last line of defense against hunger – has never been more crucial. That more than half of food pantries and soup kitchens ran out of food in a single month should alarm and dismay every New Yorker who believes none of our neighbors should go to bed hungry. Federal emergency food resources were increased in the last Farm Bill (passed in January 2014); to respond to this crisis, our State and City governments should follow suit.

SNAP remains our nation's first line of defense against hunger; monthly benefits enable more than \$250 million in food spending in New York City every month. However, research shows that the adequacy of SNAP benefits was already an issue prior to November 2013 (given the 40 percent participation rate of SNAP recipients in emergency food programs), and as these cuts indicate, the households that rely on these resources cannot easily replace them. Congress should work to address the issue of benefit adequacy so that this program can more effectively keep people off food pantry and soup kitchen lines. Meanwhile, our State and City governments should redouble their efforts to expand access to SNAP by availing of federal waivers and options to lower barriers to access, and through targeted outreach efforts.

In addition, maximizing participation in school meals, through expansion of Universal School Meals and Breakfast after the Bell options, will provide hundreds of thousands of New York City children with access to a nutritious breakfast and lunch.

Acknowledging that poverty and food insecurity are closely linked, continued progress on proven and effective poverty alleviation efforts, including expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and living wage jobs, should be a focus at all levels of government.

Methodology

To generate these findings, 567 food pantries and 148 soup kitchens (total=715) in Food Bank's emergency food network were surveyed about the number of visitors they saw in September 2014, compared to September 2013.

The survey was sent in October 2014 to the email addresses of the directors of the food pantries and soup kitchens currently listed as members of Food Bank's agency network. The survey was completed online, and returned to Food Bank electronically. A total of 260 completed surveys (representing 36 percent of food pantries and soup kitchens) were randomly selected for analysis, in proportion with the composition of Food Bank's agency network as follows: 205 food pantries (79 percent of the sample); and 55 soup kitchens (21 percent of the sample). The confidence interval for results, at the 95 percent level, is plus or minus 5 percentage points.

FOOD BANK FOR NEW YORK CITY

Main Office

39 Broadway, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10006
t: 212.566.7855 | f: 212.566.1463

Warehouse / Distribution Center

Hunts Point Cooperative Market
355 Food Center Drive
Bronx, NY 10474
t: 718.991.4300 | f: 718.893.3442

Community Kitchen & Food Pantry

252 West 116th Street
New York, NY 10026
t: 212.566.7855 | f: 212.662.1945





Soup Kitchen Locations:

FLATBUSH/MIDWOOD 1372 Coney Island Ave Brooklyn NY 11230	BORO PARK 4114 14th Ave Brooklyn NY 11219	QUEENS/REGO PARK 98-08 Queens Blvd Rego Park NY 11374
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Testimony prepared by

Beau G. Heyen

for the

Committee on General Welfare

on

Hunger in New York City

November 24, 2014

on behalf of

Masbia Soup Kitchen Network

Introduction

Good afternoon and thank you, Chairmen Levin, and the members of the Committee on General Welfare for hosting this hearing to address the issue of hunger in New York City. My name is Beau G. Heyen and I am the Chief Operating Officer at Masbia Soup Kitchen Network. As an organization that stands where the rubber meets the road in the fight against hunger, Masbia appreciates the opportunity to express our support of current anti-hunger initiatives and to provide a recommendation to make New York City's emergency food system stronger and more efficient in addressing the diverse needs of those who are hungry.

First and foremost, Masbia Soup Kitchen Network is grateful for the unyielding support of City Council and the entire administration in leading the charge to address the needs of those who are hungry. Looking beyond emergency food, the comprehensive platform of addressing living wages, paid sick leave, affordable housing, immigration, and more, will have a great impact on the needs of individuals and emergency food providers, like Masbia. We also applaud the initiative of city agencies to better understand the issues that impact those in need, such as

offering more scheduling options to account for challenges in arranging appointments around child care and employment.

Masbia Soup Kitchen Network, founded in 2005, is known by our unique signature store front, “restaurant without cash-registers” model of providing hot, healthy meals to those in need. Eliminating the barriers often associated with receiving basic services, Masbia offers food for anyone and everyone in need, free from red tape or burdens of bureaucracy. With the support of over 250 volunteers each week, alongside a small staff of 17, Masbia joins a small percentage of kosher emergency food providers and is the only kosher soup kitchen network in a city where hundreds of thousands of Jewish families live at or on the edge of poverty. Overall relying heavily on private funding, Masbia’s food pantry program is largely supported through emergency food funding from the federal, state and city levels.

While the economy may be improving, last November’s cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) and the slow personal financial recovery felt by many have contributed to Masbia serving record numbers in 2014. More than doubling the number of meals provided through our nightly dinner service and weekly pantry program in 2013, Masbia’s network of three soup kitchens and food pantries will surpass the 1.5 million meal mark before the end of this calendar year. As one can imagine with such growth, our organization has had to stretch every dollar to ensure that we can maintain the utmost dignity and respect for all of our clients, while never turning anyone away.

Today, as we join other voices in the anti-hunger movement and a supportive administration, it feels as if we may be preaching to the choir. Masbia shares in a vision of an emergency food system that not only provides the best for those in need, but also is efficient and cost effective. Our goal today is that we take the great work accomplished so far by City Council and the anti-hunger community and take it one step further.

Emergency Food Assistance in New York City

A network of over 800 emergency food providers, from small food pantries in the basement of a local church or synagogue to multiservice agencies with multi-million dollar budgets, work through organizations like Food Bank For New York City and City Harvest to provide non-perishable items and fresh produce to families and individuals in need. With funding from federal, state, and city sources, outline below, along with private donations, allows emergency food providers to meet the needs of the community they serve.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), a program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), purchases a variety of self-proclaimed nutritious, high-quality USDA Foods, and makes those foods available to each state. The amount of food each state receives out of the total amount of food provided is based on the number of unemployed persons and the number of people with incomes below the poverty level in that state. States then provide the food to local agencies, usually food banks, which in turn distribute the food to local organizations, such as soup kitchens and food pantries that directly serve the public.¹ The amount of food available to each soup kitchen or food pantry is designated in proportion to the

¹ *The Emergency Food Assistance Program Fact Sheet.* (2014). United States Department of Agriculture.

amount of people each organization serves in relation to all emergency food provided in the city, allowing each organization to accept or refuse items on a case by case basis.

The Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) is a food and nutrition program of the New York State Department of Health. The Department of Health contracts with food banks across the state to provide grants to eligible food pantries, soup kitchens, and emergency shelters. These grants are awarded as a line of credit to be used on specific items within each food bank's wholesale market. With a variety of items available, emergency food providers are able to select the items and quantity that best fit their needs at any given time.

Currently, at the city level, the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) is administered in two cycles. For the first half of the fiscal year, NYC's Human Resources Administration, henceforth referred to as the HRA EFAP cycle, manages the funding and orders items it deems important to the emergency food system, similarly to TEFAP. Emergency food providers, like Masbia, are then awarded a grant allotment that HRA uses to designate the quantity of each item that the organization is to receive. During the second half of the fiscal year, these same organizations are again awarded a grant, but, like HPNAP, are allowed to purchase necessary items on their own through the Food Bank For New York City's wholesale market.

Aligning New York City's Vision for a Healthy, Hunger-Free City

Working together, NYC's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Human Resources Administration and Mayor's Obesity Task Forces, in cooperation with Food Bank For New York City, released recommendations on how to prepare a balanced pantry bag, following the USDA's My Plate initiative (Exhibit A). Creating a standard way a pantry packages look like based family sizes, and is broken down into the areas of fruits & vegetables, grains and dairy & protein.

The usefulness of the balanced pantry bag guidelines chart comes in the clarity of how to measure the amount of each item needed to provide the nine meals per person required for a complete pantry package. This is done by translating the weight of an item into points, with a desired number of points allotted per family size. For example, a pound of fresh produce, a 15-16 ounce can of corn or 12-16 ounce bag of frozen fruit all equal one point, with a family of two needing nine points for their allotment of fruits and vegetables. For protein, however, a pound of dry beans, a 15 ounce can of salmon or two 5 ounce cans of tuna equal two points, with the same family of two receiving an allotment of 6 points of protein.

Unfortunately, some items provided by the HRA EFAP cycle do not fit this helpful chart, such as 2 ounce packages of tuna instead of 5 ounce cans. Although this may seem like a small difference, when an organization is processing over 1,000 bags a week, these small discrepancy make a large difference. Furthermore, when combining other funding sources, similar items may be available in the correct size, causing the system to have random, unnecessary confusion in products and product value.

There are a few other pieces of the current HRA EFAP cycle that do not align with other city initiatives. For starters, as a city that has worked diligently to reduce the intake of sugary drinks, two of the thirty five items given out to local emergency food providers are fruit juice. Also, even with

initiatives to support regional farmers and to make fresh food more available, the current system only offers shelf-stable items.

Meeting the Diverse Needs of New Yorkers

This year, to better meet the religious, cultural and dietary needs of our clients, while reducing waste, we instituted a client choice food pantry model. Now in six languages, individuals select items from a shopping list in the three categories outlined on the city's balance pantry bag guidelines (Exhibit B). Items vary each week depending on what is available within the predetermined foods from TEFAP and EFAP and items purchased through the Food Bank's wholesale warehouse with HPNAP or other funds.

As one of the few organizations that focus on providing food that is kosher, we are often at a disadvantage when it comes to the diversity and quantity of items available. For example, TEFAP allotments are based on each individual item available, not on the overall amount of food received. This means, that refusing an item that is not kosher does not allow us the opportunity to receive more of an item that is kosher.

HPNAP and the second cycle of EFAP, on the other hand, allow us to use the money how we see fit, not limiting us on items that are kosher or forcing us to lose out when items are not kosher. Food Bank For New York City and City Harvest are also both working with kosher agencies, and other agencies that have specific dietary needs, to enhance options, often finding private donors to offset the higher costs associated with these items.

The HRA EFAP cycle is most similar to TEFAP, with only 20 of the 35 items being kosher, and only one item, grape juice, being Glatt kosher (Exhibit C). Although HRA does allow our organization to refuse non-kosher items, we are told that the "removal of food items does not guarantee you will receive more of another food item," meaning there is a potential that we will not receive the total amount of our allotted funds. Although we are not fully aware of what we are yet to receive for our last EFAP distribution in December, which is addressed in more detail in the next section of this testimony, we could expect, based on the amount of funds remaining and the average value of our past kosher-only deliveries, losing up to 16% of our allocated funding.

Increasing the Impact

Like any charity, we strive to stretch every dollar to meet our mission. As we continue to see the number of clients we serve increase, we have created ways to enhance our effectiveness and efficiency. One enhancement was the introduction of a live inventory system using cloud-based Google technology. This new method allows us to not only see what items we have available across the network but also translates the items into points that match the balanced pantry bag guidelines.

The key to this system working effectively is to ensure that each site has the number of items needed in each category. More importantly for an organization like Masbia, where numbers continue to grow, our clients are becoming more scared that items will run out. To avoid long "bread lines" and people crowding the sidewalk before we open to be first in line, we need enough of each item to be offered to everyone who comes to take a package.

Sadly, since HRA EFAP cycle is ordered and delivered without our knowledge, we have no idea how or when the items will impact our system, which usually results in stockpiling items for several months as we wait to have enough to introduce into our pantry system. In fact, only two items, the before mentioned tuna and grape juice, come in quantities that allow for immediate introduction into our system, which requires a threshold of 200-500 items pending on the site. Other items, like spaghetti

sauce and peanut butter, come in smaller quantities and would easily cause a problem were we to run out before everyone had a chance to select their pantry items.

The Solution

Although there is need for a greater conversation about the way we provide food for those in need, City Council has an opportunity to make a significant change that can immediately impact the entire emergency food system in meaningful ways. By simply consolidating the two EFAP cycles into the second EFAP grant allocation model, emergency food organizations can use their allotted funding in Food Bank's wholesale market, avoiding issues around surgery drinks and better meeting the religious, cultural and dietary of their own communities. Giving direct access to funding, organizations can better spend their funds on items and quantities that are actually needed to supplement other sources. For Masbia, this would allow us to spend our allocated funds on items that are kosher. Furthermore, by lifting the restrictions around non-perishable foods, Food Bank would be able to procure fresh produce, which is kosher and halal by default, for emergency food providers to purchase. Moreover, consolidating the two programs will also reduce administrative costs on behalf of HRA, reducing the amount of paperwork required and staff time processing food orders.

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Tel: 718.972.4446 • Fax: 718.972.0333 • 866.9.MASBIA • info@masbia.org • www.masbia.org

How to Pack a Balanced Pantry Bag

The chart below represents a pantry bag following MyPlate nutrition recommendations, which shows approximate amounts of food to provide **9 meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner for three days)**.

RECOMMENDED QUANTITY

Family Size	FRUITS & VEGETABLES	GRAINS	DAIRY & PROTEIN
1	5 ITEMS	2 ITEMS	3 ITEMS
2	9 ITEMS	3 ITEMS	6 ITEMS
3	14 ITEMS	5 ITEMS	9 ITEMS
4	18 ITEMS	6 ITEMS	12 ITEMS
5	23 ITEMS	8 ITEMS	15 ITEMS
6	27 ITEMS	9 ITEMS	18 ITEMS

FRUITS
IF CANNED, IN 100% JUICE OR WATER
1 ITEM=4 SERVINGS

Fresh Produce4 Pieces or
1 Head/Bunch or
1 Pound

Dried Fruit15 oz

Canned Fruit15 oz

Frozen Fruit12-16 oz

100% Fruit Juice46-48 oz

VEGETABLES
IF CANNED, LOW- OR NO-SALT ADDED
1 ITEM=4 SERVINGS

Fresh Produce4 Pieces or
1 Head/Bunch or
1 Pound

Canned Vegetables15 oz

Frozen Vegetables16 oz

Vegetable Juice46-48 oz

GRAINS
1 ITEM=12 SERVINGS

Bread1 Loaf

Rolls or Bagels6 each

Rice or Pasta16 oz

Oatmeal18 oz

Cold Cereal12-16 oz

DAIRY
CHOOSE LOW-FAT (1% OR LESS)
1 ITEM=4 SERVINGS

Fluid Milk32 oz/1 quart or
4 x 8-oz

Dry Milk1 Envelope

Cottage Cheese16 oz (2 items)

Yogurts4 x 6-oz

Cheese8 oz (2 items)

Dairy Alternative32 oz
(collard greens/kale, fish with bones, soy products)

PROTEIN
1 ITEM=4 OZ PROTEIN

Dried Beans1 lb (2 items)

Canned Beans15 oz

Peanut Butter18 oz (3 items)

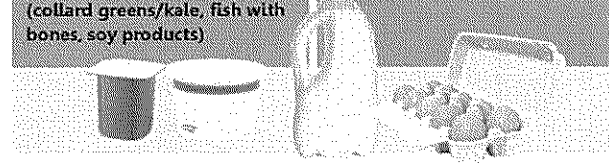
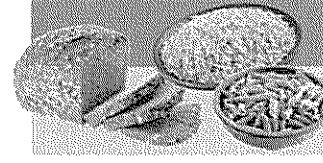
Canned Stew or Chili15 oz

Eggs6

Frozen Meat/Fish8 oz (2 items)


Tuna1 x 5-oz cans

Salmon15 oz can (2 items)



Department of Health and Mental Hygiene | Human Resources Administration | Mayor's Obesity Task Force






















**SERVING
NOURISHING
MEALS TO ALL**

Client Choice Pantry Order Form

Eating

		Client Number	Table Number		
Fruits and Vegetables					
Product		Size	Point	Quantity	Total Points
 Fresh Turnips - לפת - טערגאפס - pena - nabos		3 lb bag	3 Points	X _____ 1 Max	= _____
 Fresh Grapefruit - אשכוליות - גרייפפרוט - грейпфрут - pomelo - 柚子		3 lb bag	3 Points	X _____ 1 Max	= _____
 Fresh Carrots - морковь - מייער - גזר - Zanahorias frescas - 紅蘿蔔		3 lb bag	3 Points	X _____ 2 Max	= _____
 Edamame (Frozen) - אדממה - עדאמאמע - соевые бобы - 毛豆		1 lb bag	1 Point	X _____ 2 Max	= _____
 Applesauce - яблочный соус - עפל - קאמפאט צימאלען - עפל סאוס - Puré de manzana - 苹果泥		6-pack, 27 oz	2 Points	X _____ 2 Max	= _____
 Canned Mixed Fruit - консервированные фрукты - שימור'ם עם פירות - קאנד געמישט פרוכט - מעורבים - Conservas de frutas mixtas - 什锦果盘		15 oz. can	1 Point	X _____ 2 Max	= _____
 Canned Pumpkin - דלעת משומרת - קאנד קירבעס - консервы из тыквы - calabaza enlatada - 南瓜罐頭		15 oz. can	1 Point	X _____ 2 Max	= _____
 Canned Tomatoes - Томаты консервированные - קאנסערוון - קאנסערוון טאמאטעס - קוביות עגבניות משומרת - Tomates enlatados - 番茄罐頭		15 oz. can	1 Point	X _____ 1 Max	= _____
 Orange Juice - מיץ תפוזים - מאראנץ זאפט - апельсиновый сок - Jugo de naranja - 橙汁		8 4oz - 32 oz	1 Point	X _____ 1 Max	= _____
Grains					
Product		Size	Point	Quantity	Total Points
 Bran Flakes Cereal - דגני סובין - קלייען פלאקעס סיראל - Отруби - хлопья зерновых - Cereales copos de salvado - 燕麦麸麦片		17.3 oz bag	1 Point	X _____ 1 Max	= _____
 Brown Rice - коричневый рис - ברוינע רייז - אורז אדום - Arroz integral - 糙米		1 lb bag	1 Point	X _____ 2 Max	= _____
 Spaghetti - спагетти - לאנגע לאקש - ספאגהעסט - Espaguetis integral - 意大利面(全麦)		2 lb bag	2 Points	X _____ 1 Max	= _____
 Lo Mein Noodles (Frozen) - מקרוני מיין - לא מיין נאארלעס - Lo Mein - Лапша - Lo Mein fideos - 乌冬面		2.5 lb bag	2 Points	X _____ 1 Max	= _____
Protein					
Product		Size	Point	Quantity	Total Points
 Pinto Beans (Canned) - Пинто фасоли - שועעית - בונדליך - Frijoles pinto enlatada - 斑豆罐頭		15 oz can	2 Points	X _____ 3 Max	= _____
 Chick Peas (Canned) - חומוס משומר - פישקע ארבעס - Консервы турецкий горох - Guisantes del pollito - 鹰嘴豆		15 oz can	2 Points	X _____ 1 Max	= _____
 Sardines in water - Сардины - סרדיניס - סארדינז - Sardinas en agua - 沙丁鱼的罐頭		4.5 oz can	1 Point	X _____ 2 Max	= _____
 Pink Salmon - лосось - פיש - לאקס פיש - Salmon Rosado - 三文鱼		15 oz can	2 Points	X _____ 3 Max	= _____

Flatbush SM

11/20/14

EFAP FY'15 CYCLE I

(JULY – DECEMBER 2014)

FOOD LIST

Please note 'TYPE ITEM': Food Pantry (FP) Soup Kitchen (SK) Shared by both (FP/SK)

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SIZE</u>
FP	Black Beans	24/14-15 oz
FP	Kidney Beans	24/14-15 oz
SK	Vegetarian Beans in Sauce	6/# 10
FP	Green Beans, Cut	24/14-15 oz
SK	Collard Greens, Chopped	6/# 10
FP	Spinach, chopped	24/13.5 oz
SK	Sweet Potato, Cut, in Light Syrup	6/# 10
FP	Mixed Vegetables	24/14-15 oz
SK	Mixed Vegetables	6/# 10
FP/SK	Apple Juice	12/46 oz
FP	Applesauce, Unsweetened	12/ 4 oz 6 packs
FP	Grape Juice	12/32 oz
SK	Mixed Fruit in Natural Juice	6/# 10
SK	Peaches, Sliced in Natural Juice	6/# 10
FP	1% Milk	12/32 oz
FP	Frosted Flakes, Reduced Sugar	12/14.7 oz
FP	Oatmeal, Instant	12/16 oz
FP	Raisin Bran Crunch	12/18.2 oz
FP	Peanut Butter	12/18 oz
FP	Grape Jelly, Reduced Sugar	12/18.8 oz
FP/SK	Brown Rice, Long Grain	30/ 1lb
FP/SK	White Rice, Long Grain	30/1lb
SK	Rotini Pasta	2/10 lb
FP	Spaghetti	20/1lb
FP	Spaghetti Sauce	24/15 oz
FP	Chicken Breast, Chunk in Water	12/4.5 oz
SK	Chicken Breast, Boned in Broth	6/50 oz
FP	Chunk Light Tuna	100/2 oz
SK	Chunk Light Tuna	6/43 oz
FP	Salmon, Pink	24/14.75 oz
FP	Sardines in Water	50/4 3/8 oz
FP	Chicken Noodle Soup	24/10.75 oz
SK	Chicken Noodle Soup	12/50 oz
FP	Vegetable Soup, Reduced Sodium	12/10.5 oz
FP	Mac & Cheese Dinner, Reduced Sodium	12/6 oz

Please be advised that all items are subject to availability and may not be in inventory at the time EFAP orders are prepared.

July 2014

**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: 11/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anjali Moran
Address: 1825 Park Ave, Suite 503 New York, NY
I represent: Single Stop
Address: _____

**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: Anthony Butler
Address: _____
I represent: St. John's Bread + Life
Address: _____

**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: Triade Stampas
Address: _____
I represent: Food Bank for NYC
Address: _____

**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: 11/24/2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bronie Heyen

Address: 4114 14th Ave Brooklyn NY 11219

I represent: Maria Soup Kitchen Network

Address: 1372 Carey Island Ave Bklyn NY 11230

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joelce Bfekt

Address: 1 Plaza street west, Brooklwn

I represent: NY General Kianna Atlantic with Uniq Children

Address: 50 Blvd st, NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Louise Feld

Address: 14 Wall St, 4E

I represent: Citizens' Committee for Children

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CAMILLE ZENTNER

Address: _____

I represent: NYLAG

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 11/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sumanika Lanka

Address: 505 West 47th St., NY, NY 10036

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: 199 Water Street, NY, NY 10038

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 11/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lisa Zullig

Address: 202 Seely St Brooklyn NY 11218

I represent: Gods Love We Deliver

Address: 630 Flushing Ave Brooklyn 11206

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 11/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David DeLaughn

Address: 6 E 32nd St 7th Fl NY, NY 10016

I represent: City Harvest

Address: _____

**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: 11/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jessica Hughson - Andrade

Address: 120 Broadway 7th Fl. NY NY 10027

I represent: Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

Address: same as above

**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: 11-24-14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Laura Morrison

Address: 41 E 11 St, 7th Floor

I represent: NYU McSilver Institute on Poverty Policy & Research

Address: See above

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms