

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON AGING

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January 25, 2017
Start: 10:24 a.m.
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: STEPHEN T. LEVIN
Chairperson

MARGARET S. CHIN
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Annabel Palma
Fernando Cabrera
Ruben Wills
Vanessa L. Gibson
Corey D. Johnson
Ritchie J. Torres
Barry S. Grodenchik
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Karen Koslowitz
Deborah L. Rose
Chaim M. Deutsch
Mark Treyger
Paul A. Vallone

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Marie Phillip, Deputy Commissioner
NYC Human Resources Administration, HRA;

Lisa Fitzpatrick, Chief Program Officer
NYC Human Resources Administration, HRA

Karen Resnick, Deputy Commissioner
NYC Department for the Aging, DFTA

Barbara Turk, Director of Food Policy
NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy, MOFP

Rachel Sabella, Director of Government Relations Food
Bank for New York City

Joel Berg, Chief Executive Officer
Hunger Free America and Hunger Free New York City

Amy Blumsack, Community Action Program Director
Neighbors Together

Beth Finkel, State Director
AARP New York

Lynnette Rivera
J.I.T.A. Community Outreach Center

Rachel Sherrow, Associate Executive Director
City Meals on Wheels

Stuart Cohen, Director
Council of Jewish Organizations, COJO, and
Staten Island Food Pantry and Social Services

Ariel Savransky, Policy and Advocacy Associate Child
and Adolescent Health and Mental Health Citizens
Committee for Children

Chef Greg Silverman, Executive Director
Westside Campaign Against Hunger, WISCAH,

Mandy Culbreath Coordinator
Justice and Reconciliation
Director of Brown Bag Lunch Ministry
Trinity Church Wall Street

Gregory Bruce, Ambassador & Participant
Community Kitchen
West Harlem Senior Citizen Program

Emma Morano, Manager
Policy and Research
Single Stop

Stephen Grimaldi, Executive Director
New York Common Pantry

Jessica Hughson-Andrade, Director
Benefits Access
Met Council

Jerome Nathaniel
Community Engagement Manager
City Harvest

Molly Krakowski, Director
Legislative Affairs
Jewish Association for Services for the Aged, JASA

Sudah Acharya
South Asian Council for Social Services

Maggie Dickinson, Professor
CUNY, Guttman Community College

[sound check, pause]

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Good morning.

Today's—today is Wednesday, January 25, 2017. My name is Margaret Chin and I'm the Chair of the Committee on Aging. Today's hearing will provide the committee with an opportunity to vote on two crucial pieces of legislation that we have—that we hope will have a significant positive impact upon the City's seniors and their ability to find and remain affordable housing. The first bill, Intro 1309 I introduced along with Council Member Cohen at the request of the Mayor. This bill will codify existing extension to the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption and Disability Rent Increase Exemption to eligible individuals who earn between \$29,000 and \$50,000 a year. These programs are also commonly known as SCRIE and DRIE, and they ensure that some of the City's most at-risk residents are able to afford to remain in their homes. The second bill proposed Intro 1024-A was introduced by Council Member Fernando Cabrera, and it will require city agencies to coordinate with the Department of Finance to ensure that information regarding SCRIE eligibility is disseminated to seniors along side any other

1 information provided by both agencies. The benefits
2 offered by the SCRIE and DRIE programs can provide
3 life-changing financial support for vulnerable
4 populations that often dedicate a large percentage of
5 their income to medical bills. SCRIE and DRIE are
6 essential city programs that can offset the
7 escalating costs of rents and growing income
8 inequality across the city. Both programs provide
9 qualified applicants with an exemption from future
10 rent increases and ensure landlords receive property
11 tax credits or abatements to make up the difference.
12 We believe the bills before the committee today are
13 one step towards ensuring that eligible seniors and
14 people with disabilities continue to enroll in SCRIE
15 and DRIE programs, and that information regarding
16 eligibility reaches those who need it most. For
17 these reasons I will be voting in support of Intro
18 1309 and Proposed Introduction 1024-A, and I urge my
19 fellow committee members to do so as well. With that,
20 I will now turn the floor over to the bill's prime
21 sponsor, Council Member Fernando Cabrera to say a few
22 words. Thank you.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you so
25 much to both of the chairs and to all of my

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON AGING

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2 colleagues. Intro 1024-A is a straightforward Local
3 Law that requires certain city agencies to
4 disseminate information on the senior cent--Senior
5 Citizen Rent Increase Exemption program known as
6 SCRIE to everyone identified as age 62 or older,
7 along with the written applications and related forms
8 for services provided by the agency, and where
9 practical in the same languages as the agencies'
10 written application. SCRIE is a valuable program and
11 Intro 1024-A will help reach many more seniors who
12 need this service, and with that, I'll turn it back
13 to the Chair. Thank you so much.

14 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you Council
15 Member Cabrera. We are joined by Council Member
16 Vallone, Council Member Deutsch and Council Member
17 Koslowitz of the Aging Committee. Can I have the
18 Clerk call the vote?

19 CLERK: William Martin Committee Clerk,
20 roll call vote Committee on Aging. Items are
21 coupled. Chair--Council Member Chin.

22 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I vote aye.

23 CLERK: Koslowitz.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KOSLOWIZ: [off mic] Aye.

25 CLERK: Deutsch.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON AGING

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3 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Aye.

4 CLERK: Vallone.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Aye.

6 CLERK: By a vote of 4 in the
7 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions
8 both items have been adopted by the committee.

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And we'll—we'll leave
10 the vote open for other council members in the Aging
11 Committee, and now I turn it to our Chair for today's
12 joint hearing.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
14 Chair Chink and congratulations to Council Member
15 Cabrera on the passage of this legislation. Good
16 morning everybody. I'm Council Member Stephen Levin.
17 I'm Chair of the Council's General Welfare Committee
18 and I want to thank Council Member Margaret Chin
19 Chair of the Committee on Aging for holding this
20 hearing today on reducing food insecurity in New York
21 City. I would also like to thank my colleagues that
22 have joined us, Council Member Fernando Cabrera,
23 Council Member Paul Vallone, Council Member Barry
24 Grodenchik, Chair Margaret Chin, Council Member
25 Annabel Palma, Council Member Karen Koslowtiz, and
Council Member Chaim Deutsch. Each year this

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2 committee holds a hearing on hunger in New York City,
3 which brings together members of the administration,
4 food justice advocates and emergency food providers
5 to hold a discussion on the steps that the city is
6 taking to ensure that every New Yorker has access to
7 a sufficient amount of nutritious food. According to
8 the USDA, an estimated 1.37 million New Yorkers,
9 which is 16.4% of us were food insecure in 2014.
10 1.37 million New Yorkers were food insecure in 2014
11 meaning that at some point during that year they had
12 difficulty providing enough food for all of the
13 household members due to a lack of resources or
14 insufficient money for food. Feeding America, the
15 nation's leading hunger relief organization further
16 report that New York City residents miss
17 approximately 242 million meals in a single year, a
18 statistic known as the meal gap. These numbers
19 suggest despite the resources SNAP programs to over
20 1.7 million New Yorkers, the benefits are
21 insufficient to ensure that families have enough to
22 eat. When examining food insecurity, the final stop
23 gap of our social safety net is the over 900 food
24 pantries and soup kitchens across the five boroughs.
25 According to the Food Bank, 1.4 million New Yorkers

1
2 rely on pantries and kitchens to meet their basic
3 nutrition needs. They range from sophisticated
4 operations that rival neighborhood grocery stores to
5 volunteer runs, small churches that offer food to
6 their local community once a week. Regardless of
7 their size, each one is essential to ensuring that
8 New Yorkers don't go hungry. Since the 2008
9 Recession, food pantries and soup kitchens have seen
10 an increased demand for their services every year.
11 Pantries consistently report having insufficient
12 supplies—supplies to fill pantry bags, and having to
13 turn people away when food runs out. In addition to
14 the current need, we are newly facing the political
15 reality at the federal level that puts existing SNAP
16 benefits at risk. Although we will fight every step
17 of the way, if the federal government succeeds in
18 cutting SNAP benefits, as they have promised, we must
19 be there to fill in the gaps that they leave behind.
20 In light of the critical role of emergency food
21 providers, I am displeased that yesterday's
22 Preliminary Budget did not include the \$4.9 million
23 in funding that was added to the budget last year for
24 the Emergency Food Assistance Program known as EFAP.
25 We look forward to working with the Administration

1
2 through the budget process to ensure that that \$4.9
3 million that was added to EFAP last year, and I want
4 to give a specific recognition to Council Member
5 Barry Grodenchik for fighting for that. We're
6 disappointed that it's not in the Preliminary Budget,
7 but we look forward to working with the
8 Administration through the budget process to ensure
9 that not only is that added to the FY18 Budget, but
10 that it is baselined because the reality of the
11 situation providers not knowing that that's going to
12 be there year after year creates problems within the
13 system establishing the infrastructure that they need
14 to adequately deliver the food that people so
15 desperately need.

16 I want to also acknowledge many of the
17 advocates and providers that are here today that
18 joined in that fight last year, and I'm sure will be
19 there moving forward this year. Today, I expect the
20 Administration to explain to us what efforts they are
21 making to ensure the sufficient resources are there
22 to meet the demand for emergency food because we
23 cannot allow any New Yorker to go hungry. I would
24 like to thank the Council staff for their work today
25 to prepare for today's hearing. I want to

1
2 specifically acknowledge Policy Analyst Tanya Cyrus;
3 Counsel to the Committee Andrea Vasquez; Lanier (sic)
4 Newhart, our Finance Analyst as well as our unit head
5 Dohini Sompura. I'd also like to thank my
6 Legislative Director Julie Bero, Communications
7 Director Ed Paulino and Chief of Staff Jonathan
8 Bouchette (sp?) and I will turn it over to my
9 colleague Chair Margaret Chin for her opening
10 statement.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. Good
12 morning. Thank you Chair Levine, and Chair Levin
13 [laughs] and the council members and staff for both
14 committees for coming together to hold this hearing.
15 My name is Margaret Chin and I'm Chin of the
16 Committee on Aging. Our committee is particularly
17 interested in obtaining a better understanding of how
18 seniors in the city are able to access healthy,
19 nutritional food at a reasonable cost. A person is
20 seen as food insecure when they are forced to change
21 their food habits, because they lack either the
22 financial or physical resources necessary to find
23 food. This is of particular concern for seniors who
24 are less able to stave off degenerative diseases such
25 as cancer, heart disease and diabetes when they are

1 malnourished. Seniors age 60 and older, make up
2 18.2% of the population of New York City. Many of
3 these seniors struggle to afford basic necessities
4 such as food and housing. Recently, we have
5 witnessed several supermarkets close across the city
6 like the Met supermarkets in my district forcing many
7 seniors to travel long distance to buy affordable,
8 fresh and nutritious food. The U.S. Department of
9 Agriculture' Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
10 Program commonly known as SNAP provides a monthly
11 stipend to eligibility individuals to purchase basic
12 groceries. While over 300,000 of the city's seniors
13 are currently enrolled in SNAP many other qualify for
14 the program, but are either unaware of it, or wrongly
15 believe they are ineligible. SNAP is an essential
16 resource for those struggling to make ends meet and
17 more needs to be done to publicize the program to
18 ensure that the city's seniors who are eligible are
19 not left in the cold. The Committee intends to look
20 at what the Department for the Aging and the Human
21 Resource Administration are doing to enroll eligible
22 seniors into SNAP and other ways that the agencies
23 are trying to ensure that the city's seniors have
24 access to affordable nutritious meals. With that
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1
2 said, I would to turn the floor back over to my co-
3 chair, Council Member Levin. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
5 Chair Chin. We're joined today by members of the
6 Administration, Marie Phillips, Deputy Commissioner
7 of HRA; Lisa Fitzpatrick, Chief Program Officer of
8 HRA; Karen Resnick, Deputy Commissioner of the
9 Department for the Aging; and Barbara Turk, Director
10 of Food Policy in the Mayor's Office of Food Policy.

11 Before you testify, can I ask you to—I need to swear
12 you in. Can I ask you to raise your hand, please.

13 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
14 nothing but the truth in your testimony before this
15 committee, and to respond honestly to Council Member
16 questions?

17 PANEL MEMBERS: [off mic] I do.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you. You
19 may begin.

20 LISA FITZPATRICK: Good morning. Thank
21 you, Chairpersons Levin and Chin, and members of the
22 City Council's General Welfare and Aging Committees
23 for giving us this opportunity to testify and respond
24 committee questions today My name is Lisa
25 Fitzpatrick and I am the Chief Program Officer for

1 the New York City Human Resources Administration. I
2 am pleased to be here today to discuss many of the
3 initiatives and programs that the de Blasio
4 Administration is undertaking to address hunger and
5 food insecurity. I will focus on HRA's role in
6 ensuring that food assistance continues to a vital
7 easily accessible support for low-income individuals
8 and families. Additionally, I will provide updates
9 on programs within the Department for the Aging,
10 DFTA, and the Department of Health and Mental
11 Hygiene, DOHMH, and the New York City Housing
12 Authority, NYCHA that address hunger and food
13 insecurity. I am joined today by Barbara Turk,
14 Director of Food Policy for the Mayor's Office; Marie
15 Phillip, Deputy Commissioner for HRA Emergency and
16 Intervention Services; and Karen Resnick, Deputy
17 Commissioner for the Department for the Aging.

18
19 In one of the most expensive cities in
20 in the world, HRA works to ensure that no New Yorkers
21 is in the position of having to choose between paying
22 for expenses such as rent or purchasing nutritious
23 food. HRA accomplishes this by providing a wide
24 range of supports including eviction prevention and
25 rental assistance among other benefits and services.

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2 However, despite our efforts and a comprehensive
3 outreach strategy, hunger and food insecurity
4 continue to be a persistent problem in New York City.
5 According to the City's 2016 Food Metrics Report,
6 1.37 million New Yorkers or 16.4% of New York's
7 population were food insecure at some point during
8 2014 including nearly one in five children. As we
9 have testified in the past, and as advocates in the
10 Council are aware, food insecurity is one developed
11 of unemployment, under-employment, declining wages
12 and the increasing costs of rent food and other
13 commodities all of which culminate in income
14 inequality. Chronic food insecurity has devastating
15 effects of individuals' children and families.
16 Adults who experience food insecurity have higher
17 rates of cardiovascular disease, other chronic
18 diseases and maternal depression. Children are more
19 likely to display poor academic performance,
20 declining social skills, and are more likely to be
21 clinically obese when dealing with food insecurity.
22 And seniors facing food insecure—food insecurity are
23 more often unable to meet their nutritional needs,
24 which accelerates the onset and severity of
25 conditions such as cardiovascular disease, vision

1 problems, diabetes and increases the rate of falls.

2 In response to these devastating effects, the de

3 Blasio Administration supported the campaign to raise

4 the minimum wage, and continues to expand and

5 preserve not only our stock of affordable housing,

6 but also supportive housing, both necessary tools to

7 address and reduce homelessness. And finally, it is

8 why HRA expanded its rental assistance, emergency

9 grants and anti-eviction legal services programs. At

10 HRA we address income inequality and poverty by

11 providing essential services and supports not only

12 through increased access to benefits and programs to

13 reduce hunger and food insecurity, but also work to

14 disrupt their social and economic determinants.

15 According to a report—a report by the Association for

16 Neighborhood and Housing Development, almost 60% of

17 New Yorkers do not have enough savings to cover a

18 minimum of three months worth of household expenses.

19 Meaning these households are only one paycheck away

20 from the threat of eviction and entry into shelter.

21 We believe having higher wage jobs not only greatly

22 improves food security, but minimizes homelessness by

23 moving families toward financial and ultimately

24 housing stability. As an example of HRA's commitment

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2 to housing stability, in December 2016, HRA awarded
3 contracts to 11 organizations to provide 550 units of
4 supportive housing. Additionally, HRA continued
5 efforts to expand and improve employment services
6 with new RF awards announced this past November
7 Evidence based research supports these approaches.
8 When clients are able to secure living wage jobs, and
9 move up the career ladder, families have the
10 resources and the means to avoid homelessness, and
11 permanently move off the caseload and out of poverty.
12 SNAP is the nation's most important anti-hunger
13 program assisting more than 45 million low-income
14 Americans, 70-70% of whom are families with children,
15 and more than one in four households with seniors or
16 individuals living with disabilities. Currently,
17 nearly 1.7 million New Yorkers receive SNAP including
18 more than 650,000 children. Compared to a year ago
19 the SNAP caseload increased by 8,371 cases or 0.9%
20 and 11,192 recipients or 0.7%. Of these, nearly 7-
21 1.7 million New Yorkers more than 410,000 of them
22 also received cash assistance, an important safety
23 net for adults and children. Many SNAP recipients
24 are employed, but their incomes are so low that they
25 still qualify for SNAP benefits. This is why the

1
2 increase in the minimum wage is essential to lifting
3 New Yorkers out of poverty and thereby minimizing the
4 risk of its collateral consequences: Hunger, poor
5 health, and homelessness. From the beginning of the
6 de Blasio Administration, we worked to implement both
7 immediate and long-term measures to combat social and
8 economic inequality, and to ensure that each New
9 Yorker has access to as well as the resources they
10 need to succeed. Over the past three years, HRA has
11 formed—reformed, streamlined and eliminated
12 bureaucratic barriers to enrollment and
13 recertification. Not only for SNAP, formerly known
14 as food stamps, but for other programs administered
15 by the agency. Furthermore, in recognizing that that
16 these stigma can act as a barrier for some applying
17 for and utilizing benefits. HRA continues our
18 outreach to SNAP eligibility families and individuals
19 especially to vulnerable populations that are
20 particularly susceptible to food insecurity. We are
21 implementing referral—reforms so that eligible New
22 Yorkers can more easily apply, enroll and recertify
23 for SNAP benefits, and we continue to work to
24 optimize our systems allowing clients to apply and
25 recertify for certain benefits and programs in a more

1
2 efficient and accessible means online. It is our
3 goal to ensure that every New Yorker who is eligible
4 for SNAP has unencumbered access to this crucial work
5 support.

6 Now, I would like to discuss in more
7 details the benefits re-engineering technology
8 improvements and other efforts aimed at reducing
9 barriers to access. Continued improvements to
10 enrollment and staying-staying on SNAP, additional
11 staffing. Six hundred and fifteen positions, which
12 were slated for elimination in the out budget years
13 have been restored for Fiscal Year 17. By restoring
14 the headcount reduction instituted upon the prior
15 administration, we are able to improve service in HRA
16 SNAP centers, and significantly improve the SNAP
17 error rate to its lowest point in years. In fact,
18 New York State recently receive a commendation from
19 the United States Department of Agriculture praising
20 its system of party control and having the most
21 improved payment error rate in the country for
22 federal fiscal year '15, a period of October 1st
23 through September 30th. Our error rate in New York
24 City is one of the lowest nationwide.

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2 New and Improved Technology. The goal of
3 our reforms is to remove real barrier to access
4 thereby making it easier for clients not only to
5 apply for benefits, but to recertify for benefits,
6 which we know from national studies is the point
7 where some eligible clients across the country often
8 lose their benefits.

9 Enhancements to Access NYC. Access NYC
10 is a website that screens for other 30 City, State
11 and Federal benefit programs. As we've previously
12 testified, this website allows city residents to not
13 only apply for SNAP online, but to submit SNAP
14 recertification applications. We continue to make
15 enhancements to the system, which now allows clients
16 to access more information. Two new features, My
17 Cases and my Documents, were recently added. My
18 Cases displays a 12-month case history, EBT balance,
19 case status, case numbers, recent payment,
20 appointments, eligibility documents needed to be
21 submitted to HRA, and an online budget letter request
22 among other case information. My Documents also
23 records when eligibility document a client submitted
24 or added to the client's electronic file. As of
25 January 4, 2017, there are 126,363 HRA online

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2 accounts for SNAP and—and cash assistance households—
3 households. Access NYC is accessible in English and
4 the six Local Law 73 languages: Arabic, Chinese,
5 Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish.
6 Launching the mobile app, which allows clients to
7 upload relevant documents instead of visiting an—an
8 HRA SNAP center or a partnering community based
9 organization or faxing or sending documents by postal
10 mail. The expansion to cash assistance case for
11 mobile document upload occurred in July 2016. Since
12 the launch of the app in November 2015, more than
13 103,000 SNAP and cash assistance households have used
14 it to submit documents. The expansion to cash
15 assistance house—house—to cash assistance cases for
16 mobile document upload occurred in July 2016. This
17 year, HRA plans to build out a full HRA mobile app
18 with additional features that provide SNAP and cash
19 assistance clients access to their HRA cases online.
20 Rather than using a computer, this will give clients
21 the ability to use their Smart phones or Tablets to
22 view case status and benefits issues—issued, read
23 electronic notices, see upcoming appointments and
24 receive text messages or email alerts about their
25 case. Clients who need to submit documents will be

1
2 able to see which have been requested from the, take
3 pictures and upload documents, and then view them
4 when they are added to their case file.

5 Expanding Self-Service Document Scanning
6 Areas at SNAP Centers and Community Based

7 Organizations: There are currently 15 SNAP centers
8 and 92 community based organizations where clients
9 can quickly and easily submit documents
10 electronically. Clients are also able to use the
11 self-service areas to submit documentation in support
12 of case changes such as the addition or removal of a
13 family member, change in rent or address. Twelve job
14 centers now have scanners, and ten job centers have
15 self-service kiosks. This expansion again means that
16 clients are able to submit documents at locations
17 convenient to them, not only our SNAP centers.

18 Providing Self-Service PC Terminals at

19 All But One of HRA's SNAP Centers. These terminals
20 allow clients to use the Access NYC portal to
21 complete and submit SNAP applications and re-
22 certifications. The last SNAP center is scheduled to
23 be outfitted with this technology by the end of the
24 year.

Implementing On-Demand Interviews

Citywide. We also rolled out on-demand interviews Citywide, which allows clients to conduct their re-certification applications at their convenience rather than wait for a call during a four-hour window or come into a center and wait for an interview. The clearance success of on-demand has been to shift from interviews taking place in person at centers to interviews held over the telephone at the client's convenience. In October 2015 before the introduction of on-demand, only 52% of completed SNAP recertification interviews were held by telephone. However, by October 2016, 76-76% were held were telephone, a 24% increase. As an additional enhancement, we plan to introduce on-demand telephone interviews for new SNAP applications—applicants by the spring. Each of these technological improvements alone represents a significant barrier being lessened or eliminated for SNAP clients. Together, they represent a wholesale change to the way in which clients apply for it, and re-certify for benefits, ultimately reducing the number of clients who do not receive the societal because it is too hard or the investment of their time is too great. By mitigating

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2 the barriers to access, we can ensure clients
3 maintain their benefits and reduce the churn of
4 clients at re-certification, which can tax resources
5 across the system.

6 New York City SNAP Participation Rate.

7 Economic improvements generally correlate to a SNAP
8 participation rate reduction. Not surprisingly as
9 the local economy improved in 2014 and 2015 the SNAP
10 participation rate in New York City declined from 77%
11 in 2013 to 74% in 2014, and 73% in 2015. We believe
12 HRA SNAP participation rates should not be compared
13 to the state and national participation rates
14 released by USDA, which this committee is familiar
15 with. The best metric for comparisons across
16 geographic areas is the Program Access Index, PAI,
17 calculated by dividing the SNAP caseload by the
18 number of people below 125% of poverty line. Based
19 on the PAI metric, SNAP coverage is higher in New
20 York City than it is in the country, and the rest of
21 New York State. Specifically, the New York City PAI
22 is 80% for both 2014 and 2015 compared to 74% in the
23 United States and 79% in New York State overall.

24 As I just summarized, over the past year
25 we took significant steps to address and improve the

1
2 processes we control to handle issues unrelated to
3 the economy that have an impact as to whether or no
4 clients are replying—applying for or recertifying for
5 a business—for benefits. Sorry. A recent data show-
6 and recent data show positive trends. The caseload
7 is increasing. Rejections are down, and successful
8 re-certifications are up. We cannot see the impact
9 of these efforts as report through the participation
10 rate yet because there is a lag in when this can be
11 analyzed. The estimate of the SNAP eligible
12 population necessary to determine the SNAP
13 participation rate relies on Census Bureau data that
14 are not released until the following year. We will
15 look at the 2016 participation rate at the end of
16 this year, and look forward to sharing with the
17 committee the progress on our engagement efforts.

18 SNAP Outreach. HRA's Supplemental
19 Nutrition Assistance Program support services, SNAP
20 support services seeks to educate the public about
21 SNAP benefits and eligibility guidelines. In
22 addition, this unit pre-screens clients to determine
23 eligibility and assists applicants with the
24 application process. In FY16, the unit provided
25 outreach services at more than 1,673 individual

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2 community events. Among its many responsibilities
3 this group is charged with ensuring that immigrants
4 with legal status and/or qualified family members are
5 enrolled in the SNAP program and receive SNAP
6 benefits. This Administration significantly expanded
7 our outreach services to immigrants as well as New
8 Yorkers with low literacy and limited English
9 proficiency by partnering with over 100 community
10 based human services and government organizations
11 with proven track records of providing services to
12 these groups. In addition, the unit managers out
13 station HRA staff at three community based paperless
14 office system sites that provide online access to
15 benefits with an 88% approval rate.

16 SNAP Support Services also provides
17 technical assistance to 103 community based
18 organizations that provide SNAP facilitated
19 enrollment and recertification services. Over the
20 past year, the SNAP Support Services pre-screened
21 more than 9,526 potentially eligible applicants.
22 Since the inception of the SNAP Health Campaign in
23 April 2015, foodhelp.nyc has seen approximately
24 117,000 lifetime users with roughly 75% being new
25 users. The SNAP Health Campaign encourages New

1
2 Yorkers struggling to afford food to seek help
3 targeting low-income seniors and immigrants.
4 Additionally, there were approximately 53,000 quick
5 moves from Food Help NYC to Access NYC representing
6 45% of site visitors up from 25% last year. Food
7 Help NYC redirects potential clients to Access NYC
8 when they are able to determine if they qualify for
9 more than 30 different city, state and federal
10 benefits. In addition to the foodhelp.nyc website,
11 various marketing materials are routinely distributed
12 to community partners by the Mayor's Office of
13 Immigrant Affairs, MOIA, the Department for the
14 Aging, DFTA, and the Mayor's Office to Combat
15 Domestic Violence, OCDV.

16 Multi-lingual marketing material is also
17 distributed by HRA's Community Affairs and Emergency
18 Intervention Services SNAP Support teams, the Mayor's
19 Community Affairs Unit, CAU, and at Senior Citizen
20 Rent Increase Exemption, SCRIE sign up event and
21 Deferred Action Citizenship events.

22 Partnering with the New York City Housing
23 Authority, NYCHA. The Mayor's Action Plan for
24 Neighborhood Safety is a collaborative effort among
25 NYCHA, 11 city agencies, community groups and non-

1
2 profits aimed at making New York City neighborhoods
3 and housing developments safer and stronger. As par
4 of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety,
5 HRA launched an outreach initiative to assist NYCHA
6 residents with information about benefits,
7 eligibility and how to access—access benefits for
8 which they may be eligible. In the spring of 2016,
9 the HRA MAP Outreach Team partnered with—partnered
10 with the New York City Housing Authority and Benefits
11 Data Trust on a targeted SNAP outreach campaign to
12 target residents in 15 MAP developments who may be
13 eligible for SNAP, but weren't receiving the
14 benefits.

15 Emergency Food Assistance Program, EFAP.

16 The city supports the wide range of services provided
17 by food pantries and soup kitchens through HRA. In
18 FY17, HRA's emergency food assistance programs total
19 funding for food and administrative expenses is \$16.3
20 million with a baseline of \$11.4 million, which
21 includes \$750--\$775,000 added from the New York City
22 and Council budgets. While food distribution to
23 those in need remains paramount, EFAP has also
24 focused on setting a higher nutritional standard for
25 all foods that are provided—are provided to and

1 distributed by the Emergency Food Network. Since
2 2008, EFAP has required all foods purchased with city
3 funding to be compliant with the New York City Food
4 Standards Requirements and meet nutritional standards
5 including, but not limited to standards for sodium,
6 sugar and trans fats. We aim to ensure that every
7 New Yorker has a hot and healthy meal while also
8 working to reduce the prevalence of obesity, diabetes
9 and cardiovascular disease. In addition, HRA
10 requires that all 499 emergency food programs funded
11 by EFAP provide SNAP outreach services. These
12 services include SNAP eligibility pre-screening
13 assistance with the SNAP application process and
14 guidance on making healthy food choices.
15

16 In 2015, HRA and the Helmsley Charitable
17 Trust, Redstone Strategy Group, New York State,
18 HPNAP, and the Director of Food Policy in the Mayor's
19 Office and key New York City emergency food
20 distributors formed the New York City Food Assistance
21 Collaborative. Over two years, the Collaborative
22 came together to enhance coordination among emergency
23 food suppliers and bring new resources to support the
24 important work of over 1,000 community based food
25 providers, and distribution of \$130 million of food

1
2 annually. This collaborative is working to build
3 capacity and increase food supply to the-to the
4 city's neighborhoods most underserved by emergency
5 food providers. This includes inventory management,
6 client choice, and program capacity through
7 infrastructure improvements by on-site storage and
8 refrigeration cooling systems, and mobile food
9 delivery. Through collaboration, coordinate site
10 visits, training and technical assistance. This
11 collaborative seeks to improve data sharing and food
12 distribution throughout the Emergency Food Network.
13 We are thankful to the Council for the joint effort
14 with the Mayor's Office to fund an additional \$4.9
15 million to provide additional food and other
16 resources to community based groups. The Helmsley
17 Charitable Trust's investment of \$9.8 million for
18 infrastructure and support includes the development
19 of a new shared data and mobile app system, and
20 finally the receipt of \$4.5 million food support from
21 the United Way of New York City and City Harvest and
22 food resources has further increased the investment.
23 Through this combined effort, 10 million pounds of
24 new food will be distributed over 44 local food
25 programs in 12 underserved neighborhoods in FY17.

New data and new technology will food providers better serve clients and address unmet needs through a more efficient and resourced system.

ABAWD Labor. In May 2014, New York City accepted a waiver, which allowed single able bodied adults also known as Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents, ABAWD, who are not—who are unemployed or underemployed to re—to receive SNAP when they could not find more than 80 hours of work per month. Such waivers are permitted for areas of high unemployment and as such, New York State had been covered.

However, the improved economy means some areas no longer qualify. At last year's hunger hearing, we reported that the Borough of Manhattan below West 110th Street and below East 96th Street was the only part of the city impacted by ABAWD requirements because it did not meet the federal standard for a waiver. We are pleased to report that through the coordinated efforts at HRA and in partnership with the State and FNS, we were able to defer any impact to our SNAP clients in 2016. For 2017, we are working with the state to address potential ABAWD waiver issues beyond these areas of Manhattan due to improving economic conditions. We expect to provide

1
2 additional information about the extent of the ABAWD
3 waiver that we will have in 2017 where we would
4 appear before the Council at our Preliminary Budget
5 Hearing.

6 I will now discuss efforts from our
7 partners at the Department of Health and Mental
8 Hygiene, DOHMH and the Department for the Aging, DFTA
9 and their work contributing to the Administration's
10 efforts to address food insecurity and hunger.

11 Partnering With DOHMH. In an effort to
12 close—in an effort to help clients close the gap in
13 their food budget, the New York City Department of
14 Health and Mental Hygiene distributes Health Bucks,
15 coupons which can be used to purchase fresh fruits
16 and vegetables at all New York City farmers markets.
17 Health Bucks are distributed in several ways
18 including as a SNAP incentive where for every \$5.00
19 customers spend using their EBT card at the market,
20 they receive a \$2.00 Health Buck representing a 40%
21 increase in their purchasing power. This initiative
22 allows SNAP recipients to buy high quality nutritious
23 produce while supporting local—while supporting
24 regional and local farms. In 2015, more than 423,400
25 Health Bucks were distributed at farmers markets with

1 the SNAP incentive, and by community based
2 organizations as part of their nutrition and health
3 programming. New York City DOHMH recently expanded
4 this innovative program from a five-month session to
5 a 12-month program so that SNAP participants can
6 stretch their purchasing power year round. Outreach
7 to older New Yorkers. Through a partnership started
8 in September 2014, HRA, the Robin Hood Foundation,
9 Benefits Data Trust, DSTA--and DSTA committed to
10 reaching and enrolling eligible seniors in the SNAP
11 program. In 2015, about 68% of seniors who are
12 eligible for SNAP participate in the program. While
13 higher than at--while higher than the nations--the
14 national average, we believe that city's
15 participation rate could be even higher among seniors
16 were it not for several barriers including limited
17 mobility, lack of knowledge and perceive stigma
18 associated with accepting government assistance.
19 Employing BDT's proven model of targeted outreach and
20 application assistance, using enrollment data for the
21 five boroughs and working with HRA to complement our
22 outreach. The New York Benefit Center implemented a
23 phone and direct mail campaign for seniors who are
24 not receiving SNAP. When seniors respond to this
25

1 targeted outreach, highly trained staff from the New
2 York Benefit Center guides them through the process
3 from beginning to end offering application
4 assistance, document support and follow-up services.
5 Since its inception, this program has successfully
6 mailed 214,668 outreach letters, conducted robocalls
7 with the recorded message from Commissioner Banks for
8 130,448 household in conjunction with the mailings.
9 Screened via telephone 46,628 households for SNAP,
10 began SNAP applications for 19,352 households and
11 submitted 17,186 SNAP applications on Access NYC.

12
13 In early 2017, the Robin Hood Foundation
14 and the City are planning to roll out a joint
15 campaign to increase participation in targeted
16 benefit programs including SNAP, WIC and the Earned
17 Income Tax Credit, all proven anti-poverty programs.
18 A major component of this two-year campaign will be
19 an expansion of the collaborative and targeted
20 outreach among HRA, EDT, and Robin—and the Robin Hood
21 Foundation. The campaign will include mass media,
22 and grassroots outreach and service delivery for the
23 potentially eligible individuals.

24 DFTA Initiatives to Address Hunger and
25 Food Insecurity. According to the City's 2016 Food

1
2 Metrics report, one in ten senior citizens lives in a
3 households with insufficient food. In addition, one
4 in four recipients of emergency food in New York City
5 is 65 years of age or older. Twice their percentage
6 of the overall population. Many seniors who are
7 living on fixed incomes are forced to make decisions
8 between paying for housing, medication or food
9 developing in housing insecurity, increased health
10 risks, and hunger. The New York City Department for
11 the Aging, DFTA, offers several programs to address
12 hunger and nutritional needs among older New Yorkers.

13 Home Delivered Meals. Each weekday
14 DFTA's Home Delivered Meals Program provides
15 nutritious meals to about 18,000 older New Yorkers
16 who have difficulty regularly leaving their homes,
17 lack of formal or informal supports that can
18 regularly provide meals or are unable to prepare
19 meals themselves. Clients who call the local case
20 management agency are assessed by telephone to
21 determine eligibility for means, as well as their
22 nutrition risk. Clients with a high nutrition risk
23 are immediately referred for in-home nutrition
24 counseling. An in-home assessment follows, and those
25 capable of reheating meals are given the choice and

1 flexibility of choosing between twice weekly delivery
2 of frozen meals and daily delivery of a hot meal each
3 week day. The selection of frozen meal delivery
4 provides the senior with the option of deciding when
5 they want to eat and which meal they prefer. At the
6 time of the in-home assessment, clients are screened
7 for eligibility for public benefits including SNAP.
8 Those eligible are assisted in applying. The number
9 of meals delivered to homes each year has been
10 steadily increasing from 4.36 million in FY15 to 4.46
11 million in FY16, and a projected 4.54 million in
12 FY17, an increase of 180,000 meals or 4% over two
13 years. In addition to these week day meals, DFTA
14 works in partnership with City Meals on Wheels, which
15 coordinates with the non-profits network to deliver
16 weekend, holiday and emergency meals to these
17 recipients. In FY16 they delivered 1.5 million-55
18 million additional meals.

19
20 Congregate Meals. DFTA funds 250 senior
21 citizens that provide hot nutritious meals to nearly
22 30,000 older adults each day. The centers are
23 located in all 59 community districts in the city,
24 and they welcome individuals age 60 and older. Each
25 center offers at least one daily meal with some

1 offering more often at no charge to the senior
2 although voluntary contributions are accepted.
3 Senior Center programs offer an array of services
4 such as information assistance and health and
5 wellness programs. A 2016 Fordham University study
6 of DFTA's funded centers found that meals, health and
7 wellness programs and the opportunities to socialize
8 with others were among the most frequently cited
9 leaders to attend a center. Working in consort,
10 these centers help to promote senior's health and
11 overall—a wellbeing overall. Meals are provided
12 according to city, state and federal nutrition
13 guidelines and menus are created reflecting the
14 cultural diversity in the communities they serve. In
15 FY16, a total of 7.77 million congregate meals were
16 served. The grand total of meals served for FY16 was
17 11.9 million DFTA plus 1.555 million City meals,
18 which equals 13.45 million meals.

19
20 Special Initiative Food Forums. The
21 Aging in New York Fund, the non-profit—the not for
22 profit arm of DFTA hosts a series of educational
23 forums to increase communities' awareness of food
24 insecurity among seniors and to generate ideas for
25 helping to meet the nutritional needs of older New

1
2 Yorkers. Events have been held in three
3 neighborhoods identified through data analysis to be
4 of especially great need: Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant
5 and the South Bronx. Additional forums are planned
6 with the next to take place in a Queens neighborhood
7 of high need to be determined shortly. In these
8 forums committee—in these forums leaders representing
9 a cross-section of a particular community briefed
10 those in attendance. This includes community
11 leaders, interfaith lay leaders, academics and
12 students, and seniors who are community ambassadors
13 for change in their neighborhoods. The forums
14 culminate—culminate in open networking out with
15 resource tables to further develop new initiatives to
16 address this crisis.

17 Conclusion. SNAP and the Emergency Food
18 Assistance Program as well as other initiatives
19 detailed in this testimony will continue to provide
20 necessary nutrition assistance to New York—to New
21 Yorkers in need. But more remains to be done to
22 ensure that every New Yorker has the resources they
23 need to purchase health food for themselves and their
24 families. The Administration will continue to work
25 to expand access and remove barriers to these

1
2 essential benefits and services. We are also working
3 to protect against any proposed federal cuts to SNAP—
4 to the SNAP program or the nation's safety net
5 programs as well as the policies that may harm our
6 immigrant communities across the city. This
7 Administration is labor focused on addressing hunger,
8 homelessness, and income inequality, which is why we
9 are implementing our plan to create or preserve
10 200,000 units of affordable housing and 15,000 units
11 of supportive housing. Why we reinstated the city's
12 Rental Assistance Programs and expanded the City's
13 Eviction Prevention Initiative, and why we called on
14 Albany to raise the state's minimum wage. We look
15 forward to the continued collaboration with the
16 Council and advocates. I welcome your questions.
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
20 for your testimony.

21 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Before we start
22 questions, I wanted to give an opportunity for
23 Council Member Treyger and Council Member Salamanca
24 on the Committee on Aging to cast their vote.
25

1
2 CLERK: Roll call continuation, Committee
3 on Aging, Introductions 1309 and 1024-A. Council
4 Member Treyger.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I vote aye.

6 CLERK: Council Member Salamanca.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: I vote aye.

8 CLERK: The vote now currently stands at
9 6 in the affirmative for both items. [pause]

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Thank you. I'm going
11 to start off with a--a couple of questions, and then
12 I'll pass it onto my colleagues, and thank you to
13 the--the panel for this long testimony. There's a lot
14 of interesting information there. Since I chair the
15 Committee on Aging, I'm going to focus my question on
16 seniors. So you talk about this outreach program
17 specifically for older New Yorkers, and--so this
18 started in September of 2014 when HRA started working
19 with the Robin Hood Foundation. So in that program,
20 do you have a number of seniors that actually did
21 submit their application and enrolled in the SNAP
22 program? [pause]

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: Good
24 morning. So for the--So for the senior program--

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: [interposing] Can you
3 identify yourself for the record?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: I'm sorry.
5 Good morning. My name is Marie Phillip, Deputy
6 Commissioner for Emergency Intervention Services at
7 HRA. So for the BDT Initiative, which works with
8 seniors to enroll them in--in SNAP benefits, 9,000
9 seniors were enrolled through that B--B--through the
10 BBT Initiative.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: The program that you
12 sent out robocalls and mailings.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: So yes,
14 that was--yes, that is the program. They did
15 robocalls, they did mailing. They reached out to
16 seniors to assist them in the completion of the SNAP
17 application and through that process 9,000 seniors
18 were enrolled.

19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Were these robocalls
20 in different languages or--or everything was just only
21 in English?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: I believe
23 they were all in the required languages that HRA
24 provides because there are nine according to Local
25 Law.

1

2

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: The--the robocalls,

3

too?

4

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: Yes.

5

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: The--the Commissioner

6

has spoken all the different languages?

7

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: They were

8

provided with the translation survey.

9

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay. So did you have

10

like a--was there a certain target like you look at

11

the seniors because you have their information based

12

on the--the last name then calls were done in Chinese

13

or in Spanish or--

14

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: We--they

15

were not done as far as I know, and I can provide you

16

with additional information after--if I cannot provide

17

it to you now, but as far as I'm aware, they were

18

done through the languages available in the moment,

19

and any of the required languages were also provided

20

through BDC--

21

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: [interposing] Yeah I--

22

I--

23

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP:

24

[interposing]--and through--and through written

25

literature.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I would like to follow
up with you and get a little more detail--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP:
[interposing] We will provide you with more specific
information.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --and see how
successful a program like that could help with other
types of outreach. The other question was when you
were testifying about the waiver for the able body
without dependents, right now only Manhattan south of
96th Street is being affected.

LISA FITZPATRICK: In 2016, the waiver
included all boroughs with the exception of
Manhattan, and within Manhattan only residents below
West 110th Street and East 96th Street were affected,
and required to participate under the ABAWD Rules.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Now, does that include
students who are enrolled full time in college and
they're over 18?

LISA FITZPATRICK: The ABAWD Rules apply
to adults 18 through 49 years of age. Students have
a similar eligibility requirement. It's actually
very similar to the ABAWD requirement in that
students have to work 20 hours per week. ABAWDs have

1
2 to work or be engaged in the work, HRA work
3 activities for 80 hours per month. So the students
4 are covered by a similar work requirement and not
5 necessarily the ABAWD requirement.

6 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So was that
7 requirement listed for the other boroughs except for
8 Manhattan? Was it the same situation?

9 LISA FITZPATRICK: No, the student
10 eligibility requirements have been in place for quite
11 some time. So that in effect throughout the city,
12 all five boroughs.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, yeah because I
14 have constituents coming to my office and they--it was
15 that in--in the last year that certain boroughs
16 students who were going to college full time were
17 exempt.

18 LISA FITZPATRICK: Not for under the
19 Student Eligibility Rules. You can requirement with
20 20 hours per month. I believe if an affiliate for
21 approve college work/study programs, and that helps
22 them to meet the requirements. But the Student
23 Eligibility Rules have been replaced for many, many,
24 many years. So separate and apart from the ABAWD
25 requirements.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, one last
3 questions is that do you have any data in terms of
4 how many seniors are enrolled in the SNAP Program? I
5 mean you had some percentage in your testimony. Do
6 we have like a total number of SNAP recipients that
7 are 60 and over?

8 LISA FITZPATRICK: We don't have that
9 today, but we will be able to provide to you at a
10 later date.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, thank you. I'm—
12 Chair, I'm going to pass it on to you, and then other
13 colleagues. Thank you.

14 LISA FITZPATRICK: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
16 Chair Chin. I have a few questions, and then I'll—
17 I'll pass it over to my colleagues, and then we'll
18 probably come back for some more. The first question
19 I have. So as we all probably know, the new
20 President of the United States Donald Trump is
21 announcing today some efforts to crack on down on
22 quote, unquote sanctuary cities. At least that's
23 what was reported last night and this morning. I
24 tried to find some specifics as to what exactly that
25 would mean, and the—the details are vague. Do we

1
2 have any insight as to whether any efforts by the
3 federal government to go after cities that don't
4 deploy their local law enforcement to assist ICE and
5 their enforcement actions. Whether any of those
6 would be affecting low-income New Yorkers
7 experiencing food insecurity and whether any of
8 those—do we receive federal funds that could be
9 subject to—to, you know, the federal government
10 revoking those federal funds. You know, not—not
11 federal funds that are—that constitute entitlement?

12 LISA FITZPATRICK: [coughs] So the Mayor
13 said yesterday I think we're entertaining any and all
14 scenarios right now, and until we have much more
15 specific information I think we're all—we want to be
16 fairly cautious about speculating on any of this, but
17 I think we have done a pretty—I'd a very thorough job
18 a very thorough job at this point trying to
19 understand as much as we can understand from--

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

21 LISA FITZPATRICK: --the limited
22 information that we're getting, right. So I—I think
23 hopefully we'll know a little bit more, and we'll be
24 able—you'll see something more and hear something
25 more. As we know it, you'll know it, and—but we are

1
2 obviously concerned about all of it, and all of the
3 different ways whether it's block granting of SNAP
4 or, you know, concerns about how benefits get cut off
5 for people who are otherwise eligible because of
6 their immigration status. As you know, people who
7 are here who are undocumented themselves are not
8 eligible, although their children may be, and there's
9 speculation about that. But I think we all need to
10 just find out what actually is going to be the
11 writing before we say much more about that.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, and you're
13 concerned?

14 LISA FITZPATRICK: Oh, yes. Yes, I-I-we
15 are.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, because--
17 videotape [interposing] Very concerned.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I mean because what--

19 LISA FITZPATRICK: I mean that is--it is
20 already the subject of much conversation both
21 internally and publicly [coughs] since the election.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Because this could
23 have a very real impact on people's lives in terms of
24 the resources that they're getting --

25

1
2 LISA FITZPATRICK: Yeah, no, that's—it's
3 exactly—it is all true, and what—I think what we're
4 concerned about is how do we size that? How do we
5 figure out how much of our financial exposure we have
6 on something like that. How many people are
7 affected, which is essentially the question. I don't
8 know.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But it has the
10 potential of taking food out of the mouths of
11 children, is that right?

12 LISA FITZPATRICK: [pause] I want to see
13 what he's proposing. I'm worried about all of it.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, alright. I'll—
15 I'll put it out there that I'm afraid that federal
16 actions under the Trump Administration could
17 literally take food out of the mouths of hungry
18 children. That's unacceptable in New York City. I
19 want to ask about efforts by the Department of
20 Education for expanding Breakfast in the Classroom,
21 and what impact that has had in terms of the number
22 of meals going to children—school children in the
23 city school system. This Administration has, you
24 know, vastly extended access to—to free breakfast,
25 which is free for everybody, for all children

1
2 regardless of income of the family. Do we have—do we
3 have data on—on how many meals are being consumed
4 and—and—and the trajectory of that. In other—in
5 other words, how—how effective the expansion of
6 Breakfast in the Classroom has been since being
7 rolled out at the HMS schools?

8 LISA FITZPATRICK: Yes, I do. [pause] I
9 just want to pull this up so I have it in front of
10 me. [coughs] So as you know, we're doing Breakfast
11 After the Bell in elementary schools. We are—we took
12 an approach, which was to say that—and—and breakfast
13 in the—Breakfast After the Bell in elementary schools
14 we took an approach that we do that over a three-year
15 period. I'm not sure that I have in front of me the
16 number of schools that are currently enrolled in the
17 program. So we'll have to get that for you in the—
18 after the hearing. I'm sorry. I don't have that.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We know it's here.

20 LISA FITZPATRICK: It's going. I think
21 the—the thing I do want to tell you is that the—the
22 rollout is going very well.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

24 LISA FITZPATRICK: We've got a couple of
25 schools that have not been as enthusiastic. The

1 leadership has not been as enthusiastic as had been
2 widely report--

3
4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

5 LISA FITZPATRICK: --but I think the vast
6 majority of schools have really been excited about
7 this, and I'm excited about the fact that we're
8 trying to figure out how to do a hot breakfast as
9 part of that, you know, to allay some of the parents'
10 concerns that they are losing a hot breakfast. So
11 it's really, you know, it's a program that I think
12 has been fully embraced by the schools and by--and--and
13 created some innovations in the School Food Authority
14 that is really exciting.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great, great, and
16 just to provide some context, you know, I was proud
17 to sponsor two pieces of legislation in the previous
18 term on reporting on--on breakfast enrollment and
19 calling on citywide Breakfast After the Bell--

20 LISA FITZPATRICK: [interposing] Yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --and, you know, we
22 as a city lag far behind or have traditionally lagged
23 far behind other large cities because we weren't
24 aggressive. This is prior to the de Blasio
25 Administration, aggressive on--on Breakfast in the

1
2 Classroom, and so were seeing the participation rates
3 of children who qualify for free or reduced lunch
4 eating breakfast somewhere around the low 30s in
5 terms of percentiles compared to other cities across
6 the country like Newark, which was above 90 or
7 Chicago was in the high 60s or Los Angeles was I
8 think in the 70 percentile. So, we're, you know,
9 we're—we were lagging very far behind other large
10 cities, other cities that have the same
11 administrative burdens that we do. And I'm excited
12 that the—that this Administration has—has taken this
13 on as a—as a priority issue.

14 LISA FITZPATRICK: We thank you for your—
15 your efforts on this. I know that when you see the
16 numbers on—the breakfast program, you're going to
17 be very pleased--

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great

19 LISA FITZPATRICK: --on the participate—
20 you know, the participation numbers that have been in
21 media, there's a dramatic increase.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, back to the—the
23 ABAWD question. So, I was a little bit confused by
24 the testimony. So—so right now, every New Yorker is—
25 is able to access the ABAWD Waiver, or those that

1
2 live in Manhattan below 96th Street and the rest of
3 Queens are not—are not able to address it or—or—is
4 that—right now everybody is able to test the waiver?

5 LISA FITZPATRICK: The waiver applies to
6 three boroughs currently: Brooklyn, the Bronx, and
7 Staten Island. In Manhattan below West 110th Street
8 and East 96th Street they do not have the waiver. So
9 they have to meet the requirements, and as recently
10 as this year, we were getting guidance from the State
11 about additional areas that may now have to meet the
12 requirements through the ABAWD requirements.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Who makes that
14 determination? Is it the federal?

15 LISA FITZPATRICK: So the federal gov—the
16 State submitted a waiver request to the federal
17 government. It is ultimately up to the federal
18 government to determine whether or not the State can
19 have the waiver.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That's USDA that
21 makes that determination?

22 LISA FITZPATRICK: USDA Food Nutrition
23 Services. Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But literally I mean
25 just to—to gain this out a little bit, if you live on

1
2 the north side of East 95th Street, you can qualify
3 for the waiver. If you live on the south side of
4 East 95th Street, you cannot qualify for the waiver,
5 alright?

6 LISA FITZPATRICK: I agree. It is not—it
7 is not an optimal situation, but this is—this is
8 accurate representation of what the rule is at this
9 point.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I mean
11 obviously that is—that's cuckoo. I mean there's—you—
12 there's a lot of poor people, people that—that are
13 struggling that live south of 95th Street. We don't
14 live in silos in New York City, and it—it strikes me
15 as just inherently unfair that just based on what
16 side of the street you live on you—you may be—you
17 know, you may not be entitled to benefits that your
18 next door neighbor has access to.

19 LISA FITZPATRICK: Correct. It is
20 unfortunate for many of our clients in that area
21 that's in Manhattan west of—below West 110th Street,
22 and below East 96th Street that the economy actually
23 did pick up, but for a lot of our clients
24 particularly those in housing projects, New York City
25

1
2 Housing Authority projects, they didn't necessarily
3 get the benefit of the improvements in the economy.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure.

5 LISA FITZPATRICK: You know, that area
6 includes Wall Street and all of these areas where we
7 have a lot of very high income city residents. So we
8 were fortunate in not having to--to implement the
9 requirements for clients in 2016. So no one in the
10 city of New York lost benefits for failing to meet
11 the requirement last year.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. But
13 essentially--

14 LISA FITZPATRICK: [interposing] Can I
15 add something to this?

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure.

17 LISA FITZPATRICK: We have been and I
18 think, you know, the Chief Program Officer and her
19 staff who are here today have done an amazing job of
20 trying to make this case on behalf of New York City.
21 We are very--as [coughs] as is evidenced to everyone
22 in this room anyway, we are a very dense city.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

24 LISA FITZPATRICK: And so, when you apply
25 a waiver like this that was not necessarily written

1
2 with just New York City in mind, but where there is,
3 you know, less dense population and it's much
4 clearer, and there's more economic segregation as
5 opposed to some block-by-block differences within a
6 postal zip code or a community district. I mean
7 we've tried to get them down to the smallest units.
8 We're supposed to do it by I think it's county, is
9 that right?

10 LISA FITZPATRICK: Yes.

11 LISA FITZPATRICK: So, you know, the
12 proposal was don't look at Manhattan. Don't look at
13 New York County. Don't look at Kings County. Don't
14 look at Queens County. Look at smaller geographic
15 pieces of those things when you're--when you're
16 judging whether the percentage of employed peoples is
17 higher or lower. And we've--that's how we--that's how
18 we've continued to be able to push back against the
19 implications of this, but at--at this point since we
20 have economic segregation on a block-by-block level
21 in some communities and this what Chief Program
22 Officer Fitzpatrick is reference. We're--we're having
23 trouble. I mean we're working with the State on this,
24 and we've done very well this year I think and--and
25 hats off. It's something to be really concerned

1
2 about, continuing to be concerned about going
3 forward.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It's a--it's a
5 terrible policy I mean because the people that are
6 most impacted by gentrification, by increased rents
7 have been--if a--if a millionaire moves in next door to
8 them, their rent is likely to have--face upward
9 pressure, and then on top of it, they can't access
10 SNAP benefits because there are too many rich people
11 who live in their neighborhood. I mean that's--that
12 is a messed up policy. It's a messed up policy.
13 It's not--it's not the city's fault, but I want to be
14 clear the public knows that that's what--that's what
15 the federal government is dictating. How many people
16 have lost their SNAP benefits due to--due to this--this
17 policy being in effect?

18 LISA FITZPATRICK: So as I said earlier,
19 no one in New York City has lost any SNAP benefits as
20 a result of the ABAWD policy. We were able to work
21 with the State and federal government last year to
22 make sure that we had a sufficient number of
23 exclusions so people were exempt of some of the
24 requirements.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, but-but is it
3 likely that-that people will lose their benefits this
4 year, or are those exemptions going to be continuing?

5 LISA FITZPATRICK: So we're still working
6 on the plan to do-to determine what's going to happen
7 this year in 2017, and we don't have the answer
8 today. We should have some additional answers at the
9 Budget Testimony hearing.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I'll turn it
11 over to Council Member Barry Grodenchik for
12 questions.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
14 Mr. Chair. Good morning. Good morning panel. Happy
15 to see you here. Not so happy with the news that we
16 received yesterday, though. In his opening remarks,
17 the Chair of this committee, Mr. Levin said he was
18 displeased that the emergency food budget was cut. I
19 am more than displease. I can tell you we worked
20 very hard. Forty-eight council members, which is the
21 max you can get because there are three that never
22 sign a letter, signed onto increase the funding, and
23 I want to thank the Chair for his assiduous efforts
24 in that behalf. And then I find out after the budget
25 briefing yesterday that they have cut the baseline

1
2 back to where it was last year. And there are a lot
3 of things that we negotiate in this city, but feeding
4 people should not be one of them. I hope you will
5 take a message back. I'm not going to ask you how
6 this was--was reached, how this decision was reached
7 because I suspect that it's above your pay grade, but
8 I am really not happy about this, and we are going to
9 let the Mayor and his administration know that. As
10 you know, emergency food for many people is the back
11 stop. In--in the overall HRA budget it's not even a
12 rounding error, and in the city the overall budget of
13 86 billion plus dollars you'd need a microscope to
14 find this money. We got it up to almost \$2.00 a New
15 Yorker this fiscal year, and so can you tell me what
16 the HRA folks plan on doing? What Commissioner Banks
17 plans on doing to defend this money?

18 LISA FITZPATRICK: I'd like to first
19 state that there's a correction to the testimony in
20 terms of the total funding for food and the
21 administrative costs. In the testimony it stated
22 16.3. That actual amount is \$17.2 million. That
23 includes the baseline of \$11.4 million plus the one-
24 year addition of \$4.9 million that was noted in the

1 testimony and \$775,000 from the Council. So I'd like
2 to first make that correction--

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: [interposing]
5 Got you.

6 LISA FITZPATRICK: --to the testimony,
7 and we are continuing with our partners to try to
8 work to increase as best we can access to food and
9 ensure that through all means possible in terms of
10 our outreach and the services that we provide through
11 EFAP. So we will continue to make this a priority.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: You know,
13 I'm--I'm very impressed with the amount of money that
14 the city spends, but it's--it's just a little
15 bewildering, and I--I don't want to--want to hit this
16 too hard, but it--it was almost hurtful to me that
17 we're going backwards here, and I just don't know
18 what to make of this. It's--it's--I'm really at a loss
19 for words my friends will tell you, but I'm kind of
20 at a loss for words here, and I need to know that
21 there's going to be a commitment upon the upper level
22 of HRA starting with the Commissioner who we see on a
23 regular basis. We have a good relationship with, and
24 I know how difficult his job is, but it just doesn't
25 seem fair, and in this audience today are so many

1
2 people have worked on behalf of so many different
3 agencies to raise money privately and—and also to
4 help us in our work in getting extra dollars. So
5 please let me know that you're going to take back
6 this message on behalf of myself and many of my
7 colleagues in the Council to Commissioner Banks.

8 LISA FITZPATRICK: So, we certainly will
9 take that message back, but I would like to also add
10 that additional funding though we would like every
11 New Yorker to—to be fed, we also are very aware that
12 the funds have to be used to also increase capacity
13 and the ability to distribute the food. So
14 additional food is not the answer alone. It's also
15 the capacity of our programs to be able to utilize
16 that food and distribute it in accordance with the
17 needs of the communities. So we are aware that
18 additional money is always wanted, but it's also a
19 task to figure out how we will use it to ensure that
20 food can be distributed properly.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Have we had a
22 problem funding food pantries and other
23 organizations. I—I would--

24 LISA FITZPATRICK: [interposing] It's not
25 the issue of finding the pantries. It's the issue of

1
2 whether those pantries can accommodate the needs for
3 distribution. So in terms of capacity, storage of
4 the food, refrigeration and other administrative
5 costs that are pertinent to the ability to distribute
6 the food is also what has to be considered.

7
8 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Well, I am
9 concerned about that, but it's really the first time
10 I've heard that. I've—I've heard of pantries that
11 don't have enough food. I've never heard of a pantry
12 that had too much food, and if that's problem, maybe
13 we need to talk about it, but I—I don't know that the
14 chair has ever heard about it. It just seems to me--

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP:
16 [interposing] Pantries have to—we've heard in
17 beginning statements that pantries can range to
18 state-of-the-art onto very small community based
19 programs. So the ability for them to store food and
20 distribute it is a factor.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay. The
22 last question on EFAP, do we check—do we track the
23 waste? I've—I've heard from some of my people in the
24 schools. I have over 33 schools in my district and
25 programs. Do we track the amount of waste, food

1 waste that goes on in—in the New York City Public
2 School System? I don't know if that's an answer for
3 a question for you or is there anybody tracking that?
4 I'll—I'll leave it at that?
5

6 LISA FITZPATRICK: Hi, Council Member.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Good morning.

8 LISA FITZPATRICK: Good morning. How are
9 you today?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Yes, I'm
11 good.

12 LISA FITZPATRICK: Good. Thank you for
13 your questions. So the short answer to that question
14 would be [coughs] that we don't currently have a
15 waste analysis for the school system. What we do now
16 have is an infrastructure of sustainability
17 coordinators within the school system that we didn't
18 have years ago, and we do have many schools that are
19 doing various waste stream diversion objects related
20 to the schools. The person who's in charge of all
21 that is a woman named Meredith McDermott, and
22 Meredith works as the Director of Sustainability at
23 the Department of Education, and I would be happy to
24 put the two of you and anybody else who's interested
25 in touch with them.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I would
3 appreciate that.

4 LISA FITZPATRICK: We're—we're IGA.
5 Yeah, we'll make sure that happens.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay.

7 LISA FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's—there's a
8 lot to talk about there.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Yeah, there
10 is a lot and, you know, I greatly appreciate the job
11 that HRA does. I know it's not easy. We represent—
12 this Council represents the most diverse place on
13 earth New York City and, you know, lately I've been
14 dealing also with getting culturally sensitive foods.
15 So, these are all things that we worry about, and I
16 know you worry about, and I do despite my
17 disappointment, I do greatly appreciate the work that
18 HRA does and that Commissioner Banks does. I now
19 it's not easy when you're servicing millions of
20 people a year. So thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you
21 for being here this morning, and we look forward to
22 working with you in your months ahead.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Council
24 Member Grodenchik. Council Member Salamanca.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you, Mr.
3 Chair. How are you? Good morning. I—I represent
4 the South Bronx. I just have a quick question.
5 Actually, I have two questions. Last week the New
6 York Times wrote an article on funding disparities
7 for senior centers. Some senior centers are getting
8 as high as \$50.31 per senior to provide services, and
9 I guess with that, you have additional programs and
10 also meals, and you also have some senior centers who
11 are getting as low as \$3.54. My question is why?
12 How—how does that contract process work where one
13 senior center can get as high as 50 bucks and another
14 one can get as low as \$3.00 per senior?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RESNICK: Hi, good
16 afternoon. I'm Karen Resnick, Deputy Commissioner at
17 the New York City Department for the Aging. We have
18 been doing our own internal analysis for some time.
19 We've been working with David Nocenti (sp?) from
20 United—From Union Settlement who issued a report, and
21 hence the New York Times Study, and frankly, a great
22 deal of this is historical. Our contracts go back
23 and many of our agency providers 30 plus years ago.
24 Once upon a time some programs were HRA funded. That
25 go transferred over to the Department for the Aging,

1
2 and we still have line item budgets. They have
3 discretionary money that's added in. Some got
4 baselined. Some did not. So, a long answer is that
5 there are disparities. We're aware of them and most
6 are historical in nature, and we're doing a lot of
7 in-depth analysis now to see about ways in which to
8 address that.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Is there a-
10 something on your database or how can we get access,
11 the Council, a list of senior centers and what their
12 reimbursement rate is per senior, per day?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RESNICK: So actually
14 don't reimburse based on a budget system of per
15 senior per day. I mean we can back into doing that
16 analysis. We really give a bottom line budget. So
17 you get just whatever, \$500,000 and then the
18 organization decides how much is personnel, how much
19 is food, how many units they're serving. So we
20 certainly can get you a listing of contracted
21 amounts--that's all public information--by program
22 and by sponsor.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Now, these
24 senior centers are again paid \$3.54. The very
25 minimum that I see here. Is there any supplemental

1
2 support that your organization is giving them to make
3 up for some of these costs?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RESNICK: Programs do
5 come to us for new needs. They come asking for
6 increases and escalations in rent. We work very
7 closely with Chair Chin and the Aging Committee. We
8 do benefit from a great deal of City Council
9 discretionary money, and so do our programs, and
10 that's often times how they are able to offset the
11 budget.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: When will your
13 agency come out with a report in terms of the
14 disparities in the funding for the senior centers?
15 When--

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
17 [interposing] I don't know that we're issuing a
18 report, but we're doing our own analysis, and we will
19 come up with a--an ask about what needs to be done in
20 order to address it. We do have a--we're working
21 towards an RFP, which is due to come out I think in
22 the next two years, and so the hope is that we can
23 address a lot of these disparities when we issue a
24 new RFP for our neighborhood senior centers.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: So—so DFTA—
3 DFTA agrees that the different reimbursement rates
4 affects the meals provided in senior centers and
5 programs provided in senior centers?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RESNICK: Yes.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Right. My—
8 thank you very much. That was very helpful. My last
9 question is for HRA. I have an HRA office in my
10 district in the back of my building, but usually they
11 provide services to almost all the zip codes in the
12 Bronx. What is the timeframe? It's a very simple
13 question. What is the timeframe from when someone
14 comes in and applies for SNAP, gets approved and has
15 access to those kind of benefits?

16 LISA FITZPATRICK: The—the timeframe
17 really depends on a household's individual
18 circumstances. If the household is eligible for what
19 we call emergency SNAP, they could get benefits in as
20 little of five calendar days from the date of
21 application. If the household is not eligible for
22 that emergency SNAP grant, then the grants are
23 typically issued within 25 days but no later than 30
24 days. There's a 30-day application eligibility
25 timeframe that's set by New York State.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: So within
3 that—for that emergency SNAP within those five days,
4 what help does HRA provide to that family that's in
5 need?

6 LISA FITZPATRICK: The family—if the
7 family has an immediate need other than food, then we
8 do ensure that they also imply—apply for cash
9 assistance. So many people who start off just
10 strictly apply for SNAP will, in fact, need a cash
11 assistance grant and there's a—a same day immediate
12 need grand for cash assistance that we do make
13 available. The SNAP Immediate Need Grant requires an
14 interview. So even though your household—by looking
15 at the application your household may be eligible for
16 just from reviewing the application because the
17 household expenses exceed the household's income. We
18 still have to have a full eligibility before we can
19 process the food stamp grant. The minimum
20 requirement is getting that benefit in the system to
21 the client within five days. Depending on the
22 office, we can get that grant to people in as little
23 as the same day or within 48 hours. It really just
24 depends on whether or not the household is available
25 for an interview, and whether or not they have the

1
2 minimum required documents in order to qualify for
3 that benefit. So once we have that interview, the-
4 the-the smallest document you need to do is to verify
5 your identity. You don't have to verify the
6 household expenses or your income or your household
7 composition, but you do have to verify your identity
8 in order for us to release the benefit.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay, thank
10 you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I have a couple of
12 follow-up questions. Going back to the-the Senior
13 Outreach Program, you mentioned that there were 9,000
14 seniors that got accepted to the program.

15 LISA FITZPATRICK: That were enrolled.

16 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: And those are in the
17 program. Now in the-in your testimony on page 9, you
18 talked about there were 17,186 SNAP applications on
19 Access. So looking at the number of applications,
20 and then you also began the SNAP applications for
21 like 19,000 households. So, it looks like almost
22 half the applications did not get accepted.

23 LISA FITZPATRICK: I can-I can answer
24 this question Chairperson Chin. Initially, you asked
25 us how many seniors were on food stamps or SNAP. We

1
2 have 413,000 individuals age 60 or older in receipt
3 of food stamp benefits or SNAP in New York City. The
4 difference that you're seeing in the testimony is the
5 outreach. The efforts of the outreach, and then
6 those individuals who actually want to move forward
7 with the application process. As we learned through
8 our experience with BDT and other outreach efforts
9 that are although we have, you know, teams of people
10 who are deployed and ready to assist families with
11 applying for benefits often times it requires their
12 follow up. It requires something that they have to
13 do in order to actually get—be eligible for a
14 benefit. We've been working—working and partnering
15 with different organizations in order to assist
16 people, Africans with—with obtaining their
17 documentation, but ultimately it's—it comes down to
18 the individual has to do what's required in order for
19 us to make an eligibility determination. So that gap
20 that you see are potentially those individuals who
21 start the process, may not have the interview, may
22 not follow up with the necessary documentation. I
23 said earlier for emergency SNAP, you need to just
24 verify your identity. You can—you can declare you
25 household expenses, your income, and your household

1
2 composition, but we absolutely do need verification
3 of your identity. So what do find many times is that
4 people start an application process, but they don't
5 necessarily follow up despite the best efforts of the
6 outreach teams.

7 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: So do you have some
8 comparison in terms of like in your testimony you
9 talk about you being CBOs in the community, and—and
10 actually having community organization that help
11 people apply, and from what I know, some of that is
12 happening in my district because it's very successful
13 even going way back when they actually—the senior or
14 resident can come into an organization and get the
15 help in the language that they—that they use, and
16 they—it was a very good process. So do you have any
17 data in terms of how successful and how do—maybe we
18 should do more of those types of one-to-one
19 assistance in the community.

20 LISA FITZPATRICK: We—we don't have any
21 data here today, and I don't know if we keep any data
22 in particular on all of the outreach efforts, but I
23 do agree when we have individuals who are working
24 directly on a one-on-one basis where people are
25 seeking to apply for assistance, those applications

1
2 tend to be more successful. In the testimony we
3 talked about or I—I talked about the efforts that we
4 have for community based organizations with—with what
5 we call the Papers Office System or POS enrollers,
6 and even with that particular process, there's an 88%
7 success rate, but it's not 100% and in that process,
8 you have a community based organization that's
9 working directly with the applicant getting all of
10 the documentations, submitting everything to HRA, and
11 88% is quite high, but it's not 100%. There does
12 tend to be some drop off even when we have that one-
13 on-one relationship where we have community providers
14 out there assisting our clients.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: At least it's a—it's
16 higher percentage so I think that's something that we
17 need to continue to work on. The question I have for
18 Karen from DFTA, now I know that the Council has
19 funded the six congregate meals. Is DFTA planning to
20 do a lot of RFP on that for the six meals?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RESNICK: No, we
22 don't do an RFP for the six meal. People will
23 voluntarily opt in, and it's discretionary funded.
24 So we can just give it to people who want to
25 participate.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: But didn't the
Administration baseline it last year?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RESNICK: Oh, that's
a good question.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, you should check
into that because we're hearing from advocates. So
that's something that we want to make sure that it's
not just the small pot of money that the Council put
in because it's—I think it's only \$600--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
[interposing] Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --thousand dollars, or
it could be more if the Administration added, but
that's necessary because we want to make sure that
seniors, you know, have food options, you know, for
the weekend. That's—that's critical, and the other
thing is that recently we heard that USDA they have
this new pilot program that you can use your SNAP
benefits to order online delivery from Fresh--

BARBARA TURK: [interposing] That's Fresh
Direct, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --Direct and from
Amazon Fresh.

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2 BARBARA TURK: Yes, there—there was a—
3 there was a very recent announcement within the last
4 month. The USDA has been thinking about this for a
5 long time, and they're—it's a pilot in seven or eight
6 states I believe, and New York State is one of them,
7 and locally Amazon Prime and Fresh Direct. So that
8 they were interested in being qualified as SNAP
9 providers, and so that's happening in New York City.

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Are you working with
11 them to—to make sure that—that people—I mean that New
12 Yorkers with SNAP benefits know about it, and also be
13 able to—

14 BARBARA TURK: We did a lot of work to
15 make sure that online providers knew about this
16 benefit. So, and the ones that we worked with did
17 not actually submit it. One of them submitted but
18 did not qualify. So we have not been in touch yet
19 with Fresh Direct although Fresh Direct has tried
20 this before. They did a pilot and—and South or South
21 France a while back, and there were—there were
22 challenges with that. We don't run Fresh Direct.
23 We're happy to be helpful to Amazon or Fresh Direct
24 in anyway they would need us to be. We have a pretty
25

2 good connection with Fresh Direct here in New York
3 obviously.

4 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay, that would be
5 goo-interesting to see how-

6 BARBARA TURK: Yes, it will be very
7 interesting to see how this happens. I think-I think
8 there's-there are a number of different questions
9 that will be asked and answered as part of this, and
10 the pilot hasn't begun and so we like everything else
11 that came out of USDA in the last 90 days, we keep
12 our fingers crossed that this will roll out.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yes.

14 BARBARA TURK: Just to be clear.

15 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: That's right. It
16 could be unpredictable. We don't know.

17 BARBARA TURK: It could be very
18 unpredictable.

19 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: I raised the issue
20 about supermarkets closing in a lot of neighborhoods,
21 and recently one in my district-

22 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --where a lot of
24 seniors live. So now senior has to travel, you know,
25 even further to be able to access, you know--

1
2 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --quality and
4 nutritious food. So I guess we're seeing that
5 working with HRA and DFTA how-how are you trying to
6 help solve this problem just like making sure senior
7 know where they can go and access good nutritious
8 food and especially like farmers market where they
9 can get the extra Health Bucks-

10 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Yes, which
11 they do need.

12 CHAIRPERSON CHIN:-which it's pretty
13 significant. So is DFTA doing anything to try to
14 like put together some information to the senior
15 centers and to seniors so they know how be able to
16 access nutritious food.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RESNICK: We can
18 certainly work directly with your office, and the-and
19 the centers that are affected by that particular
20 closure. We do have a program called Market Ride,
21 and we should and will do more outreach in education
22 about it, which is the use of school buses during the
23 down time, you know, between like 10:00 and 2:00
24 where seniors can go on a trip together to either a
25 farmers market or to a nearby supermarket or one of

1
2 the bigger, you know, box stores. And so that is
3 available, and it is free of charge, and we
4 coordinate that program with the Department of
5 Education. So that is one way of addressing that
6 problem, and we are the recipients of Health Bucks
7 from the DOHMH, and I know we have our own farmers
8 market coupons that we are able to give out as well.

9 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Okay. I mean we should
10 work together to really get that information out--

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RESNICK:

12 [interposing] Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: --to the seniors in
14 the district. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so I have a few
16 more questions and then--then we'll get to the--the
17 topic of this morning, but let's see. The first
18 question so I was looking through the--the Food
19 Metrics Report for 2016, and noticed that [coughs]
20 over the last several years, the number of green cart
21 permits seems to have declined. In 2012 there 475.
22 That increased to 2013 to 482. Then that decreased
23 in 2014 down to 452. 2015 down to 364, and in 2016
24 down to 320. So is there--is there something--is there

1
2 some greater trend or outside forces that's causing
3 that or is that something that's--

4 BARBARA TURK: There is a trend. Yes,
5 there is a trend toward fewer vendors who are using
6 the—who were given the permit or granted the permit.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Who grants the
8 permit?

9 BARBARA TURK: Using the permit.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Oh, okay.

11 BARBARA TURK: So there were originally
12 1,000 permits set aside for green carts, and--

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Could you just
14 explain really quickly green carts are--?

15 BARBARA TURK: Sure. So you—many of you
16 have seen these on the streets. These are carts that
17 then hold fruits and vegetables. No—nothing that's
18 cut up. It's all just, you know, it's apples, it's
19 oranges, it's whatever is in season, whatever people
20 are getting up at Hunts Point and other local
21 distributors, and there is a—there originally 1,000
22 permits for those carts, and they were restricted to
23 specific areas in the city that were considered to
24 be—have less access to fresh fruits and vegetables.
25 This program has been around for a while now. It's

1
2 been evaluated, and that evaluation is online. I
3 think--my understanding is approximately 500 permits
4 after much wrangling over where those folks would
5 actually be able to vend, and I would add that not
6 every fruit cart in New York City is a green market--
7 is a green cart--

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] But
9 they could be.

10 BARBARA TURK: --program. So, the
11 permits are there. The vendors are not necessarily
12 there for this program. That would be the short
13 answer to your question.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But--but it--year over
15 year I think they are continuing to--to decline. Is
16 that--

17 BARBARA TURK: Yes. The permits are still
18 there.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Permits are still
20 there.

21 BARBARA TURK: Vendors not so much.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

23 BARBARA TURK: It's a tough--it's a tough--

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25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] A tough
3 market to sell in.

4 BARBARA TURK: --it's a very tough. It's
5 just very tough. It is--it was designed to do--to do
6 what I said, which his to get more fresh fruits and
7 vegetables out there, but it also has to be a
8 business that people want to be in.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Supply and demand.
10 You need the demand.

11 BARBARA TURK: Well, we need people who
12 want to vend, who want to do this particular kind of
13 vending, right?

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

15 BARBARA TURK: And so there are other
16 ways to probably I'm going to guess make more money
17 as a vendor. You know, with more--different things
18 that are on the carts. So, I--I think people have
19 done it. I think it's--

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: What's the incentive
21 then to do--to--to do a green cart versus another type
22 of vending?

23 BARBARA TURK: I think there were--I think
24 there were another a number of people who perhaps
25 felt that, you know, it's hard to--it's hard to--I'm

1
2 not sure, but there are a lot of stories of people
3 who said oh, I was a fruit cart vendor, and then I
4 opened my own food stand for example. Although that
5 might have been one of the desired outcomes. The
6 other thing that's—that is very hard is that—and this
7 is true of any food cart operation is that local
8 business improvement districts local—local businesses
9 generally who are brick and mortar supplies. And
10 they want a notice are not so excited to have a
11 vendor outside of their space, and then the vendors,
12 of course, want to be in areas where there's a lot of
13 street traffic, and where there's street traffic is a
14 commercial strip, and where there's a commercial
15 strip, it's because there's brick and mortar
16 businesses on it.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

18 BARBARA TURK: Right, and then I've been
19 involved in situations where, you know, police have
20 been called in because there is a minor infraction,
21 and then folks are ticketed and folks get big
22 tickets. This is all connected to the street vending
23 work ultimately that you all are considering so--

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I was
25 very proud a couple years ago to sponsor the bill

1
2 that reduced the maximum fine for those types of
3 infractions.

4 BARBARA TURK: Yes, right so--

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] You can
6 get a \$1,000 fine for--

7 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] To be
8 continued at another--on another day at another
9 hearing, but I think it's been very difficult for
10 some of these permits to catch on with people who
11 might be interested in street vending.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Certainly we could
13 reach out to the Street Vendors Project---

14 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --or at least at the
16 center and see if that--to make sure--

17 BARBARA TURK: Closely. It follows us
18 very closely yes. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Let's see. In--so I--I
20 very much applaud the Administration for the efforts
21 that you've made to get--to get those that qualify for
22 SNAP benefits to go through the process, stick with
23 it, get to the end point and ultimately enroll
24 because that--I mean the--the benefits are numerous
25 both to those individuals and families and to their

1
2 communities bringing in economic resources to the
3 local stores that they'll shop at, and—and ultimately
4 provide food for those families and individuals. And
5 so I applaud all of the efforts that you're doing.
6 How—how are they matching up to the targets that
7 you've set for yourselves in terms of the numbers? I
8 mean overall, you've shared with us how many
9 enrollees and we've talked about the—the drop-off
10 that may occur. How is that matching up to kind of
11 the—the expectations that you've—that you've set for
12 yourselves? [pause]

13 LISA FITZPATRICK: In the testimony it
14 shows that the applications are up and rejections are
15 down. And, you know, that's a significant—a
16 significant amount of work that has gone into making
17 that happen and it's part of what we determined to be
18 the success of all the efforts that we're putting
19 into the Re-Engineering Plan. We're introducing text
20 messaging service this year. I think by February of
21 this year where people who opt into when they start
22 an application through Access NYC, if you opt into
23 text messaging then you'll get reminder from HRA
24 about different events, and one of the things we've
25 found was just with the shopping supermarket online

1 is that people put the applications in their basket,
2 but they don't actually complete it. So now with
3 this text messaging service it will send them—if
4 people opt into it, it will send a reminder to them
5 that you started an application but it's—you didn't
6 actually complete it. So all of these initiatives
7 are helping us to get to a point where we see less
8 traffic in the centers because more people are using
9 services online. We are seeing more people actually
10 on assistance. The economy is better. You know,
11 despite our best efforts, you know, people may not
12 connect to services for a variety of reasons. But we
13 want to make the program as accessible as possible,
14 and in doing so, we want to also reduce any barriers
15 to receiving assistance. So we're continuing to push
16 to make sure that people cannot only apply, but can
17 certify for SNAP using all of these, you know, very
18 unique approaches. So looking at the reduction in
19 center traffic, looking at the increase, although it
20 may be small, increase in SNAP eligible households,
21 and then also looking at the reduction in the
22 closings for failing to keep interviews. As I said
23 in the testimony, we introduced--in December of 2016,
24 we rolled out the last location to do on-demand
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1
2 interviews, which is Brooklyn, and we found that now
3 that there are on demand interviews, more people are
4 using that service in order to recertify for
5 assistance. So all of these small steps are going a
6 long way in trying to keep people connected to their
7 benefits or to encourage them to complete the
8 application process.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The on-demand
10 interviews that's not available yet, though, for
11 initial application right?

12 LISA FITZPATRICK: No, we're anticipating
13 releasing the on-demand interviews, the applications
14 sometime this year probably by spring of 2017.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Alright, can you
16 explain a little bit more about the efforts with the
17 New York City Housing Authority, and how in terms of
18 the metrics what—how many individuals have been
19 enrolled through that—through that Mayor's Action
20 Plan for Neighborhood Safety Collaborative Effort?
21 [pause]

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: Okay,
23 Council Member. I'll make an attempt to answer that
24 question. So in the spring of 2016, HRA did outreach—
25 partnered with—with NYCHA, and had a total of 2,378

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2 appointments to connect with individuals to connect
3 individuals to HRA services. 766 of those
4 appointments were related to assistance with SNAP
5 services, which included an application, submission
6 due to Access NYC, document submission, case status
7 update, or general information on cases, and outreach
8 enrollment data results that are not tracked as yet.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Has anyone sponsored
10 that effort.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: The
12 outreach results which aren't-aren't-the data of the
13 outreach-the data results have not been tracked as
14 yet.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, do you expect
16 that that will be-would it be possible to have a
17 little bit more of that data available by the
18 Preliminary Budget Hearings? [background comments]
19 It would be late March.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: Yes, that
21 would be in that range. It's about late March.
22 [background comments] BDT also targeted
23 approximately 7,000 NYCHA residents in supporting
24 this who we know from the results of that data match
25 were not on SNAP, but potentially eligible are given

1
2 their Medicaid coverage status, and so it should have
3 a mention about that.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But outreach has made
5 how many contacts where established?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: 7,000 NYCHA
7 residents who—and 7,255 who renewed from the results
8 of our data match were not on SNAP, but potentially
9 eligible given their Medicaid coverage status. We
10 don't have that data match results yet, but we can--

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, it would be-it
12 would be if you had, you know, how many of those and
13 that were identified are now who are in the process
14 of-of receiving the grants funds.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: So there
16 were two outreach attempts BDT to the pool of the
17 7,255, and 350 residents actually responded. So
18 again, there's a large difference there, but the
19 outreach attempts were made, but not as many
20 responses as we expected.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is that something
22 that the—the SNAP outreach teams could like go out
23 there and visibly knock on doors and say, you know,
24 the 7,000 that's not—you know, it's not a miniscule
25 number, but it's a manageable number of-of

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2 households. It might be helpful to-to actually
3 either have somebody picking up the phone and calling
4 them or knocking on their door and saying, Hey, we've
5 been trying to reach you.

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: Well, BDT
7 actually did the outreach attempt to reach out to
8 them, however, responses were low. We would have to
9 get back to you regarding how that-how we might
10 support that going forward.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So the BDT outreach
12 is just a like a robocall or is it--?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: Calls and
14 letters--

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: --and
17 through Access NYC as well.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It might be helpful
19 just considering that those are individuals that and
20 families that are NYCHA buildings. We know who they
21 are. We know that they can qualify. You know making
22 that extra effort to physically to even go out there--
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24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: It is a
25 concern.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --is not a bad idea.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: Yes, on
that we'll look into that, and we'll get back to you
on it.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. The—in our
report and I think you mentioned it in the testimony,
the SNAP centers all but one have PC Banks for online
applications. The—the final one was scheduled
through the PC Banks in 2016. Did that happen?

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LISA FITZPATRICK: The final one is
scheduled now to receive a PC Bank in this year, but
the end of this year 2017. There was an issue
regarding resources in order to do that because they
had to do significant construction in that
particular. I believe that's the Quatoma.(sp?) It's
the Quatoma SNAP Center and they don't have the
technologies the other centers have at this point.

19

20

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Which one is it? I'm
sorry.

21

22

LISA FITZPATRICK: The Quatoma Center in
the Bronx.

23

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

24

25

LISA FITZPATRICK: So because of the—the
need to do not only just to wire the building, to

1
2 actually do some construction on different floors in
3 order to provide enough space for the PC Bank. It
4 took a little bit longer than we anticipated, and we
5 are hoping to get that final center up and running
6 before the end of this year.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Now are the PC banks
8 effective? Are those--

9 LISA FITZPATRICK: [interposing] Oh, yes,
10 we find that they have been extremely effective,
11 particularly in the SNAP centers. We have recently
12 rolled out the PC Bank model in our cash assistance
13 offices where we have I think four cash assistance
14 offices currently where we're using the PC Banks for
15 individuals to start their application for cash
16 assistance and SNAP online. So it was highly
17 effective in the SNAP centers and we're finding that
18 more applications are now filed from home and not in
19 the--not in the center using the PC Banks. When we
20 first introduced the PC Bank Model several years ago,
21 we found that people weren't using our online
22 resources, and we tried to explain to them how to
23 connect to the online resources, and they just did
24 not get it. So, we decided to bring those resources
25 to centers so people could find them and understand,

1
2 and we have facilitators that are there to help
3 people navigate the system and understand how to use
4 it. So because of that, we found that more people
5 now were able to use these systems from home. And
6 recently with the mobile document upload we have, you
7 know, a large number of people, as you can see from
8 the testimony we're using mobile-mobile document
9 upload, but recently, we thought that rather than
10 just send people information about these services,
11 why not have a video of something to explain how to
12 use it because sometimes it's not just about the
13 brochures and the hand-outs. It's really about being
14 able to see visually-many people are visual learners
15 and they need to see visually how to go about using
16 the Smart Phone in order to log onto the web-to HRA
17 application, and take the pictures and then upload
18 them to their account. So that's the new strategy
19 that we're working on this year to provide that for--

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] You
21 make like a YouTube video like an HRA video.

22 LISA FITZPATRICK: That is what we're
23 going to do, you know. I'm looking at my colleague
24 Lauren Aniston (sp?) who's here and she's working

25

1
2 diligently on re-engineering and that's what we're
3 paying her for. (sic)

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] That's
5 the latest thing. I had like a drain clog the other
6 day, and I went on YouTube to like figure out how to
7 fix it. [laughter] That's like--like a good way to
8 sort of--

9 LISA FITZPATRICK: [interposing] That's
10 how we got this team up.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --a very effective
12 way to instruct people how to do things.

13 LISA FITZPATRICK: I did as well and
14 that's how this--that's how the idea came to us, but,
15 you know, we can [laughter] we can send that link
16 through an email blast because have thousands of
17 email addresses. So we can use that technology to
18 send them a link to the HRA page, and then they watch
19 the video, and learn how to use the mobile
20 application in order to upload documents and look at
21 all these other really neat features that we have
22 introduced this year.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And I just have a
24 couple of questions now on--on EFAP. Last year HRA
25

1 testified that it was looking to add frozen food to
2 the EFAP program. Has that—has that happened?

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4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: Yes, that
5 is correct. We have looked at increasing the amount
6 of food in terms of frozen foods that are available
7 to our pantries. Again, the issue of storage and the
8 ability to—to distribute them, too, is also part of
9 this process.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Absolutely.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: We have
12 looked at that, and we have increased that capacity.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so that means by,
14 you know, getting freezers and refrigerators?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: Right,
16 equipping yes, and that's part of the administrative
17 costs that we are funding to the pantries and the
18 soup kitchens.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so you spoke
20 about the—the effort that HRA is undertaking with—
21 with the various foundations. Can you—is that—is
22 that task force going to be producing recommendations
23 or how is that working? I know that it's—it's—I
24 haven't really heard the—the kind of feedback from
25 there as like what's—what's the—is there a game plan

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2 that's coming out of there, their recommendations for
3 how to improve the system as a whole? Streamline
4 this. Because EFAP has been kind of a-it's-it's gone
5 through evolutions. When-when it was baselined, you
6 know, there was a situation in the last couple of
7 years where the-the food bank procured. A portion
8 has now all gone into HRA procured portions, and that
9 was always a-a challenges because we had heard from
10 pantries that they, you know, liked the food bank
11 model because they're able to order from like a menu
12 and now it's-you know, it's all through HRA. So, are
13 there going to be recommendations coming out of that-
14 that group, and how are they going to implement it?

15 BARBARA TURK: You're referring to the
16 New York City Food Assistance Collaborative.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Correct. Yes.

18 BARBARA TURK: So that's what that is.
19 This is a group that has-is already implementing its
20 recommendations. So when we talked earlier about
21 some of the things that were in the testimony those
22 things are already happening, well underway. So let
23 me detail that a little bit for you. One of the
24 outcomes of that as we mentioned I think that
25 there's-there has been not as much coordination as

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2 there could be in terms of sharing information that
3 would lead us to understand better where the system
4 is under—where—where the network members are
5 undersupplied. And I should back up even further and
6 say that there is no single supplying entity whether
7 it's, you know, EFAP, United Way and HPNAP program,
8 you know, food bank, which has then it serves EFAP
9 and TFAP nor City Harvest. None of those
10 organizations are touching or supplying all of the
11 roughly 1,000 pantries, but 60% of the pantries are
12 being supplied by—by at least two of them. So part
13 of the whole purpose of having a collaborative was to
14 be able to look at what's happening across the city
15 in all thousand pantries to look at what's happening
16 and where the meal gap is located and to look at the
17 relationship between the meal gap and the supply. So
18 that in real terms we could start to understand where
19 we needed focus our efforts, and so folks provided
20 information on a snapshot basis to help us figure
21 that out, and out of that came what in your testimony
22 is 12. I think the—the collaboratives now are
23 another two neighborhoods, and when we say
24 neighborhoods we're looking at data on a NTA level,
25 which is a subset of approval, which is subset of a

1
2 community district. So very small level, and we can
3 provide you with information about which Council
4 Districts those NTAs that we're supplying are
5 overlapping. So when you all—so what we did was we
6 said we try to bring those 12 now 14 neighborhoods up
7 to the average supply that we see across the city.
8 And it should be noted that the average supply is
9 about 56% of the meal gap. So we're not even—we need
10 food everywhere right? We may not have the amount of
11 capacity, and that's what Deputy Commissioner Phillip
12 was talking about earlier. We may not have the
13 capacity for all of that food. If tomorrow we had
14 100 million more pounds of food, and could really up
15 the supply significantly in all parts of the city, we
16 still wouldn't necessarily have the capacity to—to
17 supply that food. If a food pantry, you know, we
18 talked earlier, there are super pantries, right? If
19 there are super pantries, and you'll hear from some
20 of them later, you know, big very robust
21 organizations and God bless them, that is not the
22 typical experience as you know. So most of these are
23 volunteer organizations that are open maybe two,
24 three, four hours a week, right. And there is no
25 question in my mind that they could be distributing

1
2 more food if they had it during those store hours,
3 but also wouldn't it be great in some neighborhoods
4 for those organizations to be open two or even three
5 days a week? And so that's what this group has been
6 looking at and funding. They've actually been
7 relying on shared data to identify places where we
8 need additional supply. We started off with funding
9 from Helmsley Charitable Trust, which does not pay
10 for food, but they do pay for refrigerators,
11 freezers, and some—and to build out certain spaces,
12 and they are also supporting the creation of new
13 pantries in certain agencies that have the capacity
14 to do that in neighborhoods where we need them. So
15 it's the—it's the most strategic effort to try expand
16 that we have—I would argue that the city has embarked
17 upon as a whole, as a collaborative since all this
18 stuff really created in the early release.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And that's—that \$9.9
20 million--

21 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] And I have
22 high hopes for it. Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so how many—and
24 so how many pantries have received the various types
25 of equipment through the Helmsley Charitable Trust?

1
2 BARBARA TURK: There are 44 pantries in
3 these 12 neighborhoods. So far they have been
4 identified and are in various stages of
5 implementation.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, um--

7 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] And we can--
8 we have provided some of that information to your
9 staff.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then going
11 through--the process of--of--so there are--there are
12 going to be neighborhoods where there's--there's no--
13 where there previously were no pantries. And so
14 there's no resources.

15 BARBARA TURK: Very, very limited. So
16 I'm going to hold up Jamaica, or not Jamaica.
17 Jamaica is the opposite. I'm going to hold up just
18 for the purpose of this conversation Jackson Heights
19 in that area. Very few resources. Not enough
20 resources in Sunset Park or in Borough Park. So
21 where--if we were going to look at Sheepshead Bay,
22 where would we actually put something. It was not
23 immediately clear to us what we would do in that
24 instance to meet the need. So it's been--this is a
25 very retail level effort, if you will. We're really

2 literally going from pantry to pantry as a group, and
3 talk to folks about what they might be able to do,
4 what it would take for them to take another 100,000
5 pounds of food a year for example.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: There were certain
7 areas--

8 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --that you mentioned
10 like Southern Brooklyn, the South Shore of Staten
11 Island and Rockaway.

12 BARBARA TURK: Yeah, Mid Island in
13 particular, yeah. Mid Island. So Mid Island, Staten
14 Island is a great example of the--because it's less
15 dense there. What makes more sense it's got a mobile
16 unit.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

18 BARBARA TURK: So, that's going to be--but
19 actually, that mobile unit has been approved and
20 we'll be starting delivery shortly, and it's going to
21 be cooperated by Jazzy and by Project Hospitality who
22 are the two major food pantry and providers in the--in
23 the borough.

24

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: One thing that might
3 be interesting to do and I'm—I apologize if you've
4 already been on top of this.

5 BARBARA TURK: Oh, no, no, no. It's
6 okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Going—so in those
8 areas after Sandy and now that's going on like four
9 years.

10 BARBARA TURK: Three, yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: There were
12 organically put together--

13 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] We'll call
14 them pop-ups.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Pop-up pantries.

16 BARBARA TURK: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I mean, you know--

18 BARBARA TURK: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --south, you know,
20 south the southeastern shore of Staten Island I
21 remember going to one or down in Graves End, you know
22 that area in—in South Brooklyn. Are we circling back
23 to those networks that existed and—and using—there's—
24 there's significant resources, community resources
25

1 that came together and did the job I'm sure that you
2 that the city was not equipped to do--

3
4 BARBARA TURK: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --and people came
6 together and did it on their own. And I'm sure that
7 after people got situated back in their homes, that
8 kind of dropped off a little bit, but those resources
9 are still out there.

10 BARBARA TURK: Staten Island Anti-Hunger
11 Task Force is one of the most organized groups that I
12 can think of, and so they--I'm--you know, it's a very
13 impressive group of people whose--I don't know what
14 else to say, just parenthetically what they are also
15 focused on, the larger issues of poverty. So
16 they're--they're a great group. But the--and the
17 leadership of that is Project Hospitality primarily,
18 which is the group that, you know, it was Terry Troy
19 who pulled all those folks together and continues to
20 be a warrior in Staten Island.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then I'm assuming
22 that then with---with the collaborative is also then
23 a layer of SNAP enrollment that is, you know,
24 coordinated there so that, you know, so that people
25 are knowing and they're able to identify their--their

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2 SNAP, you know, eligibility on site. I mean it's on
3 this—if you're standing in line at a food pantry,
4 that's a good opportunity to—to identify, you know,
5 what monthly SNAP benefits are available

6 BARBARA TURK: A voice yes, and a lot of
7 pantries do that, and not every pantry is equipped to
8 do that but most of them do. Many of them do.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is that something
10 that the average team is coordinating like the—the
11 SNAP Outreach teams.

12 BARBARA TURK: Go ahead.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PHILLIP: So yes we
14 are—that is a goal for us to ensure that all of the—
15 of those sites are equipped with SNAP support
16 services, which is the—the enrollment for SNAP.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I—I mean just
18 literally people in line for like, you know, hours
19 obviously waiting for a food pantry. It doesn't mean
20 that, you know, and honestly we would love to, you
21 know, kind of have—participate and—and, you know, sit
22 down with a collaborative and see, you know, see how,
23 you know, we could be helpful here at the Council as
24 well.

1
2 BARBARA TURK: I'd appreciate that very
3 much.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So--[background
5 comments]. Okay, so I want to thank you all very
6 much for your testimony, and for--for answering our
7 questions. We look forward to working with you
8 throughout the budget process this year. As Council
9 Member Grodenchik mentioned, you know, we cannot go
10 backwards from--from last year's budgetary allocation
11 and, in fact, we should be adding to last year's
12 allocation, and so we have an expectation. And I
13 think that just broadly that organizations out there
14 that rely on EFAP are going--yo-yoing back and forth
15 is not really a great way to proceed, and--and
16 strategically plan, and if--if--if--if we're, you know,
17 potentially looking at a, you know, 25% cut in the
18 EFAP budget this year because it's not baselined, you
19 know, how are they able to plan for that
20 infrastructure that they need to make sure that
21 they're able to have, you know, as much food as they
22 can possibly have. So, it's certainly something that
23 we would hope that as the Executive Budget that that
24 would be in there and baselined. Thank you.

1

2

LISA FITZPATRICK: Thank you so much.

3

Thank you everyone.

4

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I'm going to

5

call panels from the Food Bank of New York Rachel

6

Sabella. From Hunger Free NYC America, Joel Berg.

7

From AARP Beth Finkel, and From Neighbors Together

8

Amy Blumsack. [pause]

9

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So because we have 20

10

members of the public to testify, we're going to

11

have a three-minute clock. I know that won't be a

12

problem for Joel because he's like a speed reader,

13

but I just wanted to make sure that everybody is

14

aware that we're on the clock. Whoever wants to

15

begin.

16

RACHEL SABELLA: Okay. Good afternoon.

17

My name is Rachel Sabella and I'm the Director of

18

Government Relations at Food Bank for New York City.

19

Food Bank is the city's largest major hunger relief

20

organization, and we work with more than a thousand

21

charities, schools, food pantries, soup kitchens

22

throughout the five boroughs. First, I want to thank

23

you for holding this hearing today. We want express

24

our deep appreciation to the City Council for

25

continuing to prioritize anti-hunger funding from

1
2 EFAP increases to creating campus pantries to
3 increasing the DYCD Initiative, the Council has put
4 this as one of their top priorities, and we're
5 grateful to be your partner in this work. We're also
6 grateful to HRA for the improvements that they've
7 made to SNAP access. I'm going to keep my remarks
8 very, very brief today. You have copies of my long
9 remarks, and you all see enough of me, and what's
10 really important today is I want you to hear from all
11 of the providers in the room. We are so proud to
12 have so many members of our network here to tell you
13 the stories on the ground, to have clients here, and
14 I want you to hear their stories. The state of
15 hunger is uncertainty. There's a fear of the unknown
16 right now at time when the thousands of jobless New
17 Yorkers are at risk of losing benefits, when 1.4
18 million New Yorkers rely on already stretched food
19 pantries. We released a new report in November.
20 That report said half of food pantries and soup
21 kitchens in New York City have reported running out
22 of food. A third of them have had to turn people
23 away because they've run out of food. Two in five
24 pantries have had to reduce meals and pantry bags in
25 order to stretch their limited resources. This is a

1
2 network that can and needs more food to support New
3 Yorkers in need. Base on that, this led to our
4 surprise and extreme disappointment with the budget
5 proposal that came out yesterday. I know today is
6 not a budget hearing. So I will keep that limited,
7 but I want to say we were extremely disappointed that
8 the budget cut EFAP funding by \$4.9 million, and we
9 also did not see an expansion of Universal school
10 meals, another important tool to help families
11 struggling with food insecurities. New Yorkers need
12 New York City and this Administration in particular
13 to stand up now more than ever before. Our city
14 faces a meal gap of 242 million missing meals in
15 each—missing meals each year in every corner of the
16 city. Hunger is everywhere. We need those resources
17 to grow so that meal gap does not grow. Together, we
18 can work to close the meal gap and to support New
19 Yorkers in need. So thank you for the opportunity
20 and Food Bank and our network stands ready to help
21 you in this battle. Thank you.

22 JOEL BERG: I'm Joel Berg, CEO of Hunger
23 Free America and Hunger Free New York City. I thank
24 both committees for having this hearing. I have
25 submitted voluminous written testimony. So I won't

1
2 go over that. In addition an addendum and Op-Ed I
3 wrote calling for the total overhaul of how we access
4 essential services, but I understand that Councilman
5 Kallos is going to have a hearing on that shortly. So
6 I won't go into that in great detail. Again, thank
7 you for your attention to this issue. I want to
8 reiterate our thanks to the Robin Hood Foundation and
9 the HRA for this wonderful initiative. We are going
10 to be working with them, and many other providers
11 here on expanding access not only to SNAP by WIC and
12 EITC, which is absolutely vital. I want to echo the
13 thanks to HRA for the tremendous, tremendous advances
14 they've made in Access. I do point out, though, that
15 the On-Demand call center we have indications that
16 waits are still up to two hours. So they do need
17 more staff and more help, and I hope that is
18 addressed in the budget process. They are making so
19 many advances on so many fronts. I said this last
20 year, but compared to all our organizations years and
21 the Giuliani years and the Bloomberg years, when went
22 to these hearings, and we'd have to write furiously
23 about all the things they said that just weren't true
24 why hunger is a problem, saying why it's poor people
25 fault. I just want to say [laughs] elections do

1
2 matter as we see over and over again and having them
3 basically working collaborative with advocates and
4 with the Council is—is a huge leap forward and the
5 Mayor deserves great credit for that, although I
6 can't help but saying as an advocate I sat in this
7 chair many times when men share de Blasio raked over
8 the coals previous mayor, too, calling for cuts in
9 EFAP. So I send a reminder to my friends of that
10 past history. I do want to focus on, and I also want
11 to thank the city for its advances on the school
12 breakfast. I just in my closing minute just want
13 reiterate the importance of federal programs and the
14 devastating impact upon city when SNAP participation
15 goes down. There's an 11% drop in SNAP between
16 December 2012 and November 2016, and because of
17 federal cuts, the average benefit size went down \$162
18 per month to \$146 per month. That went down from a
19 paltry \$180 per meal—even paltrier. I don't know if
20 that's a word, but it should be, \$162. Combining the
21 declining caseload with the declining benefit size,
22 now to SNAP spending by federal government the city
23 went from \$3.6 billion in 2012 to \$2.9 billion in
24 2016, a \$700 million—million drop. So we talk about,
25 you know, \$10 or \$15 million for EFAP, and that's

1
2 important, but we also need to continue to focus on
3 SNAP, which is the big ticket item that dwarfs all
4 that, and just to say we're scared like everyone else
5 here about what these Trump Administration and if
6 he's confirmed the Secretary of Agriculture Perdue
7 who had a horrible record as Governor of Georgia of
8 fundamentally massing--messing up SNAP and--and food
9 stamp access in his state. And any attempt to block
10 grant these programs will further devastate the
11 hungry people of New York. [bell] [laughter]

12 AMY BLUMSACK: Good afternoon. My name
13 is Amy Blumsack and I'm the Community Action Program
14 Director of Neighbors Together. We're a large soup
15 kitchen and community based organization in Central
16 Brooklyn. Our mission is to end hunger and poverty
17 in the surrounding neighborhoods of Ocean Hill,
18 Brownsville and Bedford-Stuyvesant. We serve over
19 10,000 unique individuals a year many of whom are
20 struggling with poverty, insufficient income, lack of
21 affordable housing, former incarceration or substance
22 use struggles, and the list goes on. Neighbors
23 together is also a member agency of the Food Bank for
24 New York City, and in the course of one year we
25 served over 80,000 meals to people in need. I want

1
2 to thank you for the opportunity to testify today,
3 and I want to thank the Council for its leadership
4 and its prioritizing of anti-hunger programs in
5 FY17's budget. Now more than ever we need your
6 continued leadership and support in this effort
7 especially in the time of political uncertainty.
8 Despite New York City's reputation as one of the
9 wealthiest cities in the United States, there are
10 deep pockets of poverty and hunger remain a permanent
11 issue as much today as ever before. Over the last
12 four years, we've seen an increase of children and
13 families utilizing our soup kitchen, an increase of
14 over 5%, and the number of senior citizens utilizing
15 our soup kitchen remains at 10% or slightly above
16 over those years. And I want to tell you about one
17 person as an example of the need for increased EFAP
18 funding, and the need for funding and support for
19 soup kitchens and pantries. One of our most
20 dedicated and lovely volunteers her name is Deborah.
21 Her husband works full time, and they recently lost
22 their Section 8 voucher. So suddenly a huge and
23 increased percentage of their monthly income is
24 having to go towards rent. Deborah is looking for
25 work, and—and while she looks for work, she does

1 receive food stamp benefits, but the—the benefit
2 amount is not enough to support her family. So she
3 comes to Neighbors Together for income support almost
4 everyday for her herself, for her husband, for her
5 children. And so Deborah is like many, many of the
6 other thousands of people we serve a year. They rely
7 on soup kitchens and food pantries to make up the gap
8 where SNAP benefits [coughing] don't quite cover the
9 amount of need that exists for them. So I really
10 want to ask and stress that the City Council please
11 continue your leadership and stand up for increased
12 EFAP funding. I urge you to bring EFAP funding up to
13 the baseline level of \$22 million I Fiscal Year 18
14 Budget. The cuts that were proposed in the
15 Preliminary Budget are going to be harmful. And
16 again I want to stress that particularly uncertain
17 times in terms of SNAP. So we're going to really
18 need that cushion for EFAP to help protect the hungry
19 residents of New York City. Thank you very much.

21 BETH FINKEL: Hi. I'm Beth Finkel. I'm
22 the State Director for AARP New York. We've got 2.6
23 million members in New York State and 800,000 right
24 here in New York. Our membership is 50 plus, and
25 hunger has been at the basis of the work that we have

1
2 done for many years particularly in partnership with
3 the AARP Foundation. We've done an awful lot of
4 outreach and worked with terrific advocates for those
5 who standing with me now and also in the audience,
6 and currently we are part of the Robin Hood effort to
7 get more people that are older adults signed up. So
8 we'll be hearing more about that. I also am not
9 going to read my testimony. There's a lot of data in
10 here about older adults, but also a lot of data
11 around disparities around ethnic communities, and I
12 am sure that you'll be reading all that and—and
13 understanding how important it is. A lot of our
14 focus has been on SNAP outreach, and I just want to
15 echo what was said before about concern for block
16 granting and hoping that New York City government
17 will be very loud and very proactive in protecting us
18 on that. The other piece that I really want to talk
19 about is the reliance on Social Security of retirees
20 in New York, and how important food stands, but also
21 congregate meals and home delivered meals become in
22 order for them to be able to remain independent, and
23 not have to make very difficult choices about
24 medicine payment, et cetera. So I just want to throw
25 some Social Security data at you. The average Social

1 Security retiree in New York State receives \$15,580.
2
3 22.6% of the retiree recipients on Social Security
4 rely on Social Security for 90% of their income or
5 more when they retire. This is close to 23%, and
6 47.6% rely on Social Security for 50% or more of
7 their income. So you imagine living in New York, in
8 New York City particularly with the high cost of
9 living what that means, and so we can more than
10 readily understand why SNAP congregate meals and
11 Meals on Wheels are so essential to that. One of the
12 research that we did recently is call the Vanishing
13 of a Class, and we're seeing that more and more and
14 people's about. So we interviewed Boomers and Gen
15 Xers, and 51% of Boomers and Gen Xers in New York
16 City told us that the high cost of food was a costs—
17 was a high cause of financial strain for them. So,
18 again, we need to see increased funding for that. We
19 also would just like to make sure that you look at
20 our website AARP website. We work closely with FRAC
21 and we've got some good toolkits on that. So I know
22 I'm running out of time, but I want to just thank you
23 again for convening this, and to please call on AARP
24 to be helpful where we can be. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Well, thank you to
3 this panel. I want to acknowledge also our Council
4 Member Vanessa Gibson that's joined us. So at the
5 risk of—of like giving them ideas, what do you
6 anticipate might be some areas where the Council or
7 the Administration might after when it comes to food?
8 Again, I don't want to like—I don't want to give them
9 any ideas, but I want to be prepared.

10 JOEL BERG: Interesting. The House
11 Agriculture Committee had 21 hearings under the
12 Republican leadership intended to show how evil SNAP
13 was essentially, and basically testified after
14 testified indicated that it was a useful working
15 essentially highly effective program. And so the
16 House Agriculture Committee issued a report that was
17 actually shockingly moderate. It called for stricter
18 enforcement of—of the work requirements like ABAWD
19 that had general boilerplate Republican language on
20 how fraud and waste and abuse are just horrid there,
21 but in general it—it maintained the entitlement. I
22 called for maintaining the entitlement status of the
23 program run by the federal government. Now, the
24 Agriculture Committee having worked at USDA for
25 years. I can tell you it is unduly under the

3 influence of the agriculture industry, and that
4 report said ah, it's with the position the Speaker
5 Ryan has had for many years. And the House Budget
6 Committee calling for the block grants in the
7 government, which is a fancy way of saying it,
8 cutting it and pretend you're not cutting it by
9 giving money to the states to cut. So we can give
10 more tax cuts to the mega rich. So it will be
11 interesting to see at least on the—the congressional
12 side whether they do pursue this. We hope the Senate
13 will be a moderating force. Senator Roberts that—I
14 believe the—the—the Chair of the Senate Agricultural
15 Committee will monitor on this, and this discuss at
16 Schumer's office. It's your former boss, as well as
17 kind of help him continue to be tough on this with
18 the Senate Majority. An answer on the Trump
19 Administration who the heck knows. All I know is
20 they're designee for Secretary of Agriculture was a
21 story that, you know, Neil de Mause wrote a while
22 ago, you know, Georgia's War on Poor, how they
23 basically eliminated TANF for cash assistance in the
24 state of Georgia. There were many, many USDA actions
25 against Georgia under, you know, Governor Perdue, and
then his successor. So you never know what they're

3 going to do on a daily basis, but their—their
4 statements out of the box and certainly if—if—if
5 Trump basically delegates much of his domestic agenda
6 other than bashing Mexicans and pretending to create
7 jobs. If he delegates that to Paul Ryan we're in sad
8 shape.

9 AMY BLUMSACK: Can I just add very
10 briefly say that the—in the a previous Congress the
11 Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation had been
12 up for reauthorization. The Senate had a bill that
13 was in the bipartisan spirit. The House had a bill
14 that would have had devastating impacts. A
15 resolution on that bill did not happen in the last
16 Congress. At this point, we don't know if it comes
17 up again in this new one, but there is concern that
18 the House bill could lead those conversations. Tied
19 to that, in 2018, the Farm Bill is up for
20 reauthorization. So all of those questions tied to
21 SNAP can also be reopened there as well, and I think
22 we have concern about what—about what that can look
23 like. And we look forward to working with everybody
24 here to defeat some of those proposals that we could
25 potentially see.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Beth Finkel, can you—

1
2 JOE BERG: [interposing] I forgot to
3 mention one other thing if I might. We analyzed the
4 top ten states in the Union based on SNAP
5 participation as the percentage of the State's
6 population. Eight of those ten states voted for
7 Donald Trump. The myth that he promulgates that this
8 some intercity, i.e., non-white problem in states who
9 voted against him is just the false racially tinged
10 lie.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Do you have the—the
12 ten states off the top of your head?

13 JOEL BERG: I don't but most are in
14 American staff, and their dirty little secret is, you
15 know, they're relying on New York City taxpayers and
16 New York taxpayers to fund their social safety net
17 because they get a lot more in federal funding
18 overall than many paying taxes, and we pay a lot more
19 in taxes overall than we get. I can provide that.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: In the—in the Farm—
21 the Farm Bill Reauthorization that in 2018 is that
22 early 2018 or late 2018? So Congress is on their
23 schedule, and as we know, I think it took 10 years to
24 reauthorize The Elementary and Secondary Education.
25 So we're not sure if timing is open in 2018, but

1
2 it's—it's open to interpretation if it is addressed
3 there, but we are preparing as it could be open then.

4 JOEL BERG: Most likely they would pass a
5 short-term continuation if it's just a long term or
6 if they get to the bill.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The later the better.

8 JOEL BERG: Assuming they're going to do
9 bad things yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I—I want to
11 thank this panel. Thank you for—for the good work
12 that you're doing. Oh, Council Member Grodenchik.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
14 Mr. Chair. The Administration testified that they—I
15 don't where—they have problems sometimes finding
16 that--that people can take the food or something like
17 that, that there's not enough capacity at certain
18 food pantries, which was kind of shocking to me. Has
19 that happened in—in your experience, any of your
20 experiences where you had too much food?

21 BETH FINKEL: No. Not really.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay. Rachel.

23 RACHEL SABELLA: As I did specifically
24 read, staff when we have half a pantry that's running
25 out of food, a third of them turning people away, I

1
2 think what we can see is our network has and is
3 willing to take on more food.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you
5 very much. Thank you.

6 JOEL BERG: [interposing] I just want to
7 echo what my—my colleagues say, but do say that
8 individual instances there are pantries or kitchens
9 that are too small to able to handle a massive
10 increase, and that's why we say that a charitable
11 system should be a fallback position, not a
12 substitute for guaranteed jobs, wages, and a safety
13 net.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: You're right
15 about that. I don't doubt that there are—that there
16 are food pantries that aren't big enough but, you
17 know, we're—we're very concerned. Obviously, you've—
18 you've sat through this hearing about the—the cut in
19 EFAP because, you know, it's—it's backstop for many
20 people. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, everybody.
22 The next panel Lynnette Rivera, the J.I.T.A.
23 Community Outreach Center. Oh, we've also—we are
24 joined by Council Member Ritchie Torres of the Bronx.
25 Ariel Savransky, Citizens Committee for Children;

1
2 Stuart, COJO; and Rachel Sherrow, from City Meals on
3 Wheels. [pause]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Whoever wants to go
5 first.

6 RACHEL SHERROW: Hi. My name is Rachel
7 Sherrow. I'm the Associate Executive Director City
8 Meals on Wheels. I won't go through my whole spiel.
9 You know who we are, but if I can quote Council
10 Member Grodenchik and say that feeding people should
11 not be something we negotiate on, and it's what we've
12 been doing for years now in what we call I guess the
13 budget dance. DFTA and HRA misspoke when they said
14 that City Meals delivered 1.5 million in Fiscal 16.
15 We delivered 2.2 million meals. We're on track to do
16 the same this year. The issue with our recipients is
17 they're homebound. They can't get out. The food
18 banks that are used to call them are confusing for
19 them. So what's wonderful about Meals on Wheels is
20 the relationship with case management. Case managers
21 can sign up our clients for SNAP benefits, and access
22 to more food. However, with a wait list of over
23 1,800 Meals on Wheels clients who have not been
24 assessed for benefits, there's an issue. There's a
25 problem because now they're not getting benefits that

1
2 they might be eligible for like SNAP. The average
3 SNAP benefit for our homebound elderly is over \$130 a
4 month. That's very significant for folks who can't
5 get out and have any other point of access for food.
6 I won't repeat all the staff, but to understand that
7 one in three New Yorkers over the age of 65 live in
8 poverty, and hunger among that group has increased by
9 35%. We find it call food insecure. It's really
10 hunger, and just to let you know, with this wait
11 list, if we do not fund adequately the aging service
12 as Council Member Chin really knows well, we hope
13 that this is the year of the senior, because without
14 this adequate funding we will see more and more of
15 our recipients in the emergency room costing Medicaid
16 dollars, homeless because they can't pay their rent
17 because they are using their money to pay for food or
18 back in the hospital because they can't pay for their
19 medications. It's really-it's all-it all comes back
20 to hunger, and the easiest way to bring food to
21 somebody is literally to their front door, and we're
22 doing this with over 18,000 homebound elderly
23 everyday. And as we said before, we will be
24 delivering over 2 million meals a year. We are in
25 our 35th year. We've been doing this since probably

1 far too long. We thought there would be a way out
2 long ago, but as long as we're doing it, we hope that
3 we get the adequate funding, and that we continue to
4 talk about the aging population in this dialogue
5 because they are just as hungry as other populations
6 in this city. Thank you. [pause]

8 STUART COHEN: [coughs] Hello, my name
9 Stuart Cohen. I'm the Director of Council of Jewish
10 Organizations and Staten Island Food Pantry and
11 Social Services. Our Food Service Program is a
12 member of the Food Bank of New York City and City
13 Harvest. We are also a member of the Staten Island
14 Hunger Task Force in alliance with emergency
15 providers organizing to address food insecurity on
16 Staten Island. I'd like to thank Council Members
17 Levin and the General Welfare Committee and Council
18 Member King and the Committee on Aging for your time
19 today. COJO has been providing kosher food to Staten
20 Islanders for 35—for 37 years. While we serve people
21 of all faiths and ages, I'm here today to discuss
22 what is going on within emergency food services for
23 seniors in our community. There are many seniors who
24 come to our food program for bags of food to take
25 home and also to eat prepared meals together as part

1
2 of our community dinner, which we serve twice per
3 month. At COJO we also provide other services to
4 help seniors live more comfortably including clothes
5 and access to public benefits. One of the seniors we
6 serve is Ellen who came to the United States from
7 Israel. She now works with her son who recently lost
8 his job. They're really struggling, and they have
9 come to COJO for food, clothes and particularly
10 winter coats. Ellen and her family keep kosher, and
11 I am proud that COJO can provide food for her family.
12 For seniors who might have a harder time traveling
13 having services nearby our coastal transit is very
14 important. COJO is forcing (sic) up to a bus to make
15 this possible, and the need is so great when seniors
16 come to our pantry, they do come in bus loads. The
17 food provided by food banks in New York City, City
18 Harvest and New York City's Emergency Food Assistance
19 Program, EFAP, is essential to helping our seniors in
20 our community. We are asking today for more
21 resources in EFAP so more seniors can have access to
22 needy food. COJO supports increasing resources for
23 EFAP to \$42 million in the City Budget. We are
24 currently serving over 500 seniors a week, but can
25 serve more people if we had food and operational

1
2 resources to support our program. In addition, last
3 month we did 95,600 and something meals, and the need
4 is really there. The more food we get, we can give
5 it out. Thank you again for your time and continued
6 support for New York City.

7 ARIEL SAVRANSKY: Good afternoon. My
8 name is Ariel Savransky and the Policy and Advocacy
9 Associate for Child and Adolescent Health and Mental
10 Health at Citizens Committee for Children. I'd like
11 to thank Council Member Chin and Levin and the
12 General Welfare Committee and the Committee on Aging
13 for holding today's hearing. We're grateful for all
14 the work that's been done to fight poverty and
15 increase New Yorkers' access to healthy and
16 affordable food, and I'd like to submit the following
17 recommendations, many of which have already been
18 touched upon. So I'm just summarize. We're very
19 grateful for all the outreach that's been done to
20 allow more New Yorkers to enroll in SNAP. We'd like
21 to see this continued outreach, and also think about
22 expanding from to strategies to get more eligible New
23 Yorkers to enroll in the WIC program as well. Also
24 as was mentioned before and very excited about the
25 upcoming possibility for New Yorkers to use their

1
2 SNAP benefits online, and was mentioned, we really
3 would like the city to publicize this program. We
4 also urge the city to ensure that all farmers markets
5 and green carts can accept benefits, and we will
6 urging the Administration—Administration to baseline
7 the funding that the City Council puts in every year.
8 Lastly on the SNAP program, I'm not sure if there
9 were, but new guidelines were improved on SNAP EBT
10 cards this past year, and this might make it hard for
11 some of the small bodegas and supermarkets to
12 continue to administer the program. So the City
13 might have to take some action to ensure that these
14 bodegas and supermarkets can continue to participate
15 in the SNAP program. Along the lines of the WIC
16 program, we would like to make sure that WIC purchase
17 continues their fruit and vegetable vouchers. One
18 way to do this is to ensure that the benefits are
19 added to EBT cards before 2020, and also it takes
20 four ways. That will make it easier and more
21 accessible for purchasing to use these vouchers. As
22 has been mentioned a lot, we were very disappointed
23 that the funding from last year was not added in for
24 emergency food, and we would like to see that funding
25 put back in the budget, and also an increased head

1
2 count for the increased need. And also, we were also
3 very disappointed that Universal Free School Lunch
4 was not extended, and we are going to continue to
5 press the city to include that expansion of Universal
6 Free School Lunch to all New York City public school
7 students. The next set of recommendations focused on
8 initiatives to serve those residents with limited
9 access to healthy affordable food. Green carts were
10 brought up earlier. We would like to see this
11 program expanded to fulfill the 1,000 food cart
12 permits that are available. We understand there are
13 some barriers. We'd also like to see the building on
14 the success of the Fresh Program and to think about
15 ways to incentivize food retailers to open in areas
16 with limited access to fresh food such as exploring
17 how to leverage and fashion (sic) relations to the
18 Affordable Housing Plan so that those individuals
19 living in these development have access to food
20 retail outlets. Lastly, we'd like to see the
21 continued investment in programs such as Building
22 Healthy Communities and the Health Action Centers
23 that were designed by the Center for Health Equity.
24 We look forward to continuing to work with the
25

1
2 Council and the Administration this year. Thank you
3 for the opportunity to testify.

4 LYNNETTE RIVERA: Hello, my name is
5 Lynnette Rivera, and I run a non-profit organization
6 called J.I.T.A. Community Outreach Center in Jamaica,
7 Queens. We are a member of the Food Bank from New
8 York City and provide services to the community
9 including a twice weekly food pantry. Thank you for
10 giving us your attention regarding impactful anti-
11 hunger programs especially the Emergency Food
12 Assistance Program known as EFAP. I would like to
13 give my insight on why it is imperative that EFAP in
14 funding be raised to \$22 million in order to meet not
15 only the hunger deficit that is going on in New York
16 City today, but also EFAP provides relief to many
17 individuals for the burden of—from the burden of
18 financial crisis. One of the individuals is Miss
19 Miriam Rios. Miriam is one of my clients at the Food
20 Pantry. She is a retired senior citizen, single
21 mother, grandmother and of 42-year-old daughter, 22-
22 year-old granddaughter, and 12-year-old grandson.
23 Miriam's family like many families in my community is
24 struggling to make ends meet. EFPA helps my
25 organization provide her whole family with wholesome

1
2 and nutritious food. Access to this food eases the
3 burden of a mother and grandmother who would
4 otherwise choose between paying her rent or going to
5 bed hungry. Miriam's grandson also eats lunch in
6 school as part of the Free Middle School Program, and
7 also during summer meals. Meals in school and during
8 the summer are another essential way that families
9 like Miriam's have relief from hunger. While free
10 lunch in middle school is a step in the right
11 direction, I urge the city to expand free school
12 lunch for all students. No mother should have to
13 choose between one child's eating and another child
14 going hungry. Miriam comes to our community center
15 to access food. So we also able to provide her
16 daughter and granddaughter with free tax preparation
17 services. The food EFAP provides to our community
18 center allows us to be a trusted space to offer a
19 variety a resources that reach people at the core of
20 their needs. To put it simply, ensuring food for
21 struggling families makes sense for all New Yorkers.
22 Thank you again for your time today. Please continue
23 to support programs that help New Yorkers like Miriam
24 and her family. God bless. [pause]

1
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
3 to this panel. Thank you specifically Mr. Cohen and
4 Ms. Rivera for the on-the-ground work that you're
5 doing to get food to—to New Yorkers in need and the
6 great work that CCC does, and the great work that
7 City Meals on Wheels does because I've seen it first
8 hand. A quick question, though, for—for City Meals.
9 You mentioned that a waitlist. Why—why is there a
10 wait list?

11 RACHEL SHERROW: It's a wait list for—so
12 the former Deputy Mayor and DFTA Commissioner Darius
13 Dailey (sp?) implemented the PEX Program which is
14 presumed eligible. So if a client calls up and says
15 they need meals, they'll get meals right away, but
16 they won't have access to a case manager for at least
17 120 days, and it's usually longer than that. So they
18 won't get the benefits that they might be entitled to
19 including something at SNAP. We have a tremendous—
20 our population is, you know—our population are the
21 ones who are eligible for these benefits, and if
22 they're waiting on wait list there are over 1,800 as
23 of today on case management waitlists. So,
24 therefore, they haven't seen a case manager or gotten
25 benefits, tremendous benefits whether they're, you

1 know, SNAP or SCRIE or other things that keep people
2 out of poverty, and our clients are the ones that you
3 need to make sure that we have a safety net for
4 because they're not going back into the workforce.
5 They're no, you know, they're not going to be able to
6 hold on unless they have these--these entitlements.
7 So that's the wait list, and in the budget there was
8 no new money for it and that's--that's a big problem.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And so could new--
11 could new money in the budget help reduce that wait
12 list?

13 RACHEL SHERROW: Absolutely with the
14 ability to hire case managers, and so it's not--it
15 used to be baselined as well. We're asking the City
16 Council every year how can agencies be sure that
17 they're going to get the money, and then hire
18 somebody, train them. People, you know, we just had
19 a little pay equity, which was wonderful in the
20 system so that people actually stay on their jobs
21 longer than year because turnover was very high. So
22 yes, it will help tremendously.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, alright.

24 RACHEL SHERROW: And you notice
25 population is growing, increasing tremendously.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Well, thank you very
3 much. Thank you very much to this panel. We
4 appreciate all the great work that you're doing.
5 Okay, the next panel. Greg Silverman, the West Side
6 Campaign Against Hunger; Mandy Culbreath, Community
7 Church Wall Street St. Pauls; Emma Morano, Single
8 Stop; and Gregory Booth, Community Kitchen of West
9 Harlem. [pause]

10 CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Press the button.

11 GREG SILVERMAN: Good afternoon. West
12 Side Campaign Against Hunger would like to thank the
13 General Welfare Committee and the Chair, Council
14 Member Steve Levin and Committee on Aging and its
15 Chair Council Member Margaret Chin for the
16 opportunity to submit testimony at the hearing on
17 reducing food insecurity in New York City. My name
18 is Chef Greg Silverman. I'm the new Executive
19 Director of WISCAH, Westside Campaign Against Hunger.
20 I'm proud to join the WISCAH team of dedicated change
21 makers and look forward to working with the City
22 Council to reduce hunger for our neighbors in need.
23 As many of you know, founded in 1979, WISCAH is an
24 innovative supermarket style food pantry. It
25 provides access to healthy food with supportive

1
2 services, job training and policy advocacy. In the
3 last year in partnership with the Food Bank of New
4 York City and City Harvest, we've provided 1.7
5 million pounds of healthy food for over 33,000 people
6 and 1.1 million meals. 520 people were enrolled in
7 SNAP, 324 people enrolled in health insurance, and
8 about 150 people obtained employment. We serve a lot
9 of New Yorkers mostly in Upper Manhattan, South
10 Bronx, and last year 27% of our participants were 55
11 years or old-or older; 69% of our clients are
12 Hispanic and 20% are African-American. While many of
13 our customers have diverse backgrounds, they have a
14 couple of things in common. They're all struggling
15 to make ends meet, and need an emergency allotment of
16 food. We surveyed 300 of our seniors recently, and
17 three-37% said they regularly choose between buying
18 food and paying for medical care. We did research,
19 but at the same time I'm a new Executive Director and
20 I-I met Digno, one of our staff members now. He was
21 a tailor down on his luck, received food from the
22 pantry then became a volunteer, then went to our
23 Culinary Arts program. Monday night I watched him
24 leading a culinary arts program for families in need
25 in conjunction with NYU. When we look at this, you

1 know, as a chef I sit here and—and I'm often confused
2 at the idea of not having food for people in need.
3 You know, we're a food pantry trying—trying to
4 provide healthy delicious food for folks, fresh,
5 frozen, canned foods in the forms that people want
6 and need them. We want people to have choices and
7 options to be able to pull themselves out of hunger.
8 A cut of \$4.9 million by the Mayor is a way backward,
9 not forward. Not implementing Universal School Meals
10 is a step backwards. Your constituencies in New York
11 City need EFAP to be funded at \$22 million in the
12 Financial Year 2018. You know, WISCAH on top of that
13 is ready and willing to keep growing its reach. We
14 have a mobile pantry coming online thanks to City
15 Council funding this year, and we'll be drastically
16 increasing our distribution, and we continue to hope—
17 to help feed hungry people in New York. [pause]

19 MANDY CULBREATH: Hey, y'all. Good
20 afternoon Chairwoman Chin, Chairman Levin and the
21 members of the City Council Committees for General
22 Welfare and Aging. My name is Mandy Culbreath. I'm
23 the Coordinator for Justice and Reconciliation at
24 Trinity Church Wall Street where I direct the Brown
25 Bag Lunch Ministry, a member of Food Bank for New

1
2 York City. Trinity Church appreciates the
3 opportunity to present testimony today, and would
4 like to thank the City Council for your continued
5 commitment to address the issue of hunger. Through
6 dedicated funding, the City Council has played a
7 leadership in serving net, and we are pleased to see
8 continued strong leadership on anti-hunger
9 initiatives this past year. For more than 300 years
10 Trinity Church has been one of our city's religious
11 voices where George Washington first prayed, a hub
12 for 9/11 relief workers during a time of tragedy.
13 But recently in response to problems facing our
14 neighbors, Trinity Church as worked to expand our
15 feeding ministry. Over the past two years we went
16 from serving lunch two days per week to seven days
17 per week. We've introduced more of our constituents
18 and members who come from all five boroughs to food
19 service volunteer opportunity. Today Battery Park
20 City families and their children meet to pack lunches
21 at St. Paul's Chapel that will then be served to
22 working people, families and seniors at Trinity
23 Church on Wall Street by Lower Manhattan college
24 students as well as many of our other congregational
25 volunteers. One of our volunteers is Angie. She's

1
2 also one of our clients. Angie participates in a
3 time bank program that allows her to receive support
4 while volunteering to serve others in our community
5 with dignity. Angie is a senior, dignified service I
6 think while quiet kind of shouts to us is a really
7 physical (sic) New Yorker. Even on Wall Street the
8 truth is our food line is a silent rebellion calling
9 attention and addressing a problem every Wall
10 Streeter should notice on their lunch break: Hunger
11 really hurts. As we have expanded our feeding
12 ministry, our church congregation, vestry and staff
13 have witnessed an alarming truth: Hunger can no
14 longer sit in the back pew. A growing disparity in
15 income and resources among New Yorkers is a question
16 of justice, and justice will only occur when there
17 are stronger policies from government that address
18 community needs as they change. This is why it is
19 essential that the City Council's continuous
20 leadership to increase funding for New York City's
21 Emergency Food Assistance Program, EFAP, to a \$22
22 million baseline for Fiscal Year 2018 as well as
23 making school lunch universally free for all New York
24 City children. We believe that justice and
25 reconciliation must include a stronger anti-hunger

1
2 safety net from brown bag lunches on Wall Street to
3 free school lunches on every street, and food
4 pantries and soup kitchens in every corner of our
5 city. Thank you again for your time. [bell]

6 GREGORY BRUCE: Good afternoon. My name
7 is Gregory Bruce and I have—I hold the rather tongue-
8 in-cheek title of ambassador and a participant of the
9 Community Kitchen at West Harlem Senior Citizen
10 program. I want to thank the Council for allowing me
11 to speak today, and I just want to say that as
12 Ambassador within the program and as a member, I
13 guide volunteers and clients and provide information
14 about the community kitchen activities, the rules
15 therein, and programs and events that we hold. We do
16 hold a lot of them. Without me I would have—for
17 years I worked as a successful Advertising Copy
18 writer, producer, creative director. A while back a
19 car accident changed everything in my life. I lost
20 my wife, and I was in a coma for 18 months. The
21 medical bills killed me. The coma didn't. I was out
22 of work and employment prospects were and still are
23 bleak. I lived on the street for two and a half
24 years until the summer of 2014 when a gentleman in
25 front of the Community Kitchen--where I now go--

1 stopped me and said, You need to eat lunch. Okay,
2 which I did, and I continued to do to this day. We
3 all come to the kitchen for good healthy meals
4 because we lived on fixed incomes. The Community
5 Kitchen helps us to stretch our budgets, which for me
6 is very fixed because it comes from Social Security.
7 Have I mentioned that the food is healthy? It's
8 better than that. I was 120 pounds in my days from—
9 in the Summer of 2014. I'm now a strapping 160. I'm
10 bursting at the seams. The menu changes every six
11 weeks, and the members often have a say in what is
12 included and that inclusivity is very important for
13 our demographics. We are so many times forgotten. I
14 just found out that I'm—I know have a percentage.
15 This is ideal percentage from 1% to 35%. My
16 goodness. So, I—I've work there. I volunteer there.
17 I eat there, and I make people feel welcome when they
18 come there. It helps me give back to the community.
19 Oh, by the way, we do more than just provide hot
20 meals and good meals. We have a pantry there with
21 nutritious food and the produce that you've heard
22 about or the forever—the goings on that go with that,
23 the nutrition workshops and exercise classes, Health
24 Bucks and—and to expand the use of the citizen's
25

1
2 money. But really there are corners of this city
3 that are—isn't a welcoming place like the place where
4 I go to, and what we'd like to do is have more of
5 then available to us. Please, I ask the City Council
6 to continue to support our anti-hunger programs, and
7 especially ones that help us, the seniors in 35%.
8 Thank you.

9 EMMA MORANO: Good afternoon. I'm Emma
10 Morano, Single Stop's Manager for Policy and
11 Research. On behalf of One Stop, I want to thank you
12 for the opportunity to testify today, and for the
13 work that you do on the issue of hunger. Since 2007,
14 Single Stop has partnered with community based
15 organizations and colleges to operate 70 sites in all
16 five boroughs of New York City including seven placed
17 and the city's largest food pantry. They would
18 connect people to benefits and resources that they
19 need such as SNAP. In 2015, Single Stop partnered
20 with the Department for the Aging's Integrated
21 Benefits Pilot to address the issue of under-
22 enrollment that goes to—among the senior population
23 in the city. We are currently partnering with a
24 collaboration of organizations across the city as
25 part of our Robin Hood Foundation's Start by Asking

1
2 Campaign to help eligible New Yorkers access several
3 poverty fighting benefits including SNAP, WIC and
4 TC.(sic) We continue to support and increase
5 resources for all populations such as food pantries
6 on college campuses. So we applaud the committees
7 for coming together today on the issue of hunger
8 among seniors, and often over with the population.
9 So my testimony is going to focus on that. Seniors
10 with a high rate of food insecurity and struggle with
11 health issues, mobility and technology empowered,
12 which contributes to difficulties with accessing food
13 benefits and emergency. I hope you'll—you will refer
14 to my written testimony for a full comment on
15 recommendations, but I'd like to discuss the lack of
16 understanding on senior SNAP eligibility rules. Many
17 seniors mistakenly believe that they either do not
18 qualify for SNAP or that they only qualify for the
19 minimum amount discouraging both enrollment and
20 recertification. A large contributing factor is that
21 they are often unaware that reporting medical
22 expenses can help increase their benefit amount. As
23 a result, many seniors under report their expenses or
24 do not report them at all. Consider a senior with
25 \$1,800 per month in income. Without reporting

1
2 medical expenses that senior may only qualify for the
3 minimum of \$16 per month in SNAP benefits. If that
4 same senior submitted \$300 in doctor's bills, she
5 would qualify for over \$100 per month. If that
6 senior then submitted bills for \$150 in prescriptions
7 and \$40 in receipts for transportations to go to her
8 doctor's visits, she then qualifies for the maximum
9 amount of \$194 per month. Therefore, we believe that
10 SNAP eligibility outreach efforts should be enhanced
11 to help seniors understand their unique circumstances
12 and corresponding SNAP eligibility. Greater
13 transparency about the program's income net (sic) for
14 seniors about the importance of recording and
15 submitting all medical expenses with a SNAP
16 application could encourage more seniors to apply,
17 qualify for a greater benefit amount, and to
18 recertify. Thank you for the opportunity to speak
19 today.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Well, thank you so
21 much to this panel for your testimony, for the great
22 work that you all are doing especially Mr. Bruce.
23 Thank you very much for telling us your story, and
24 for sharing with us the great strides that you've
25 been making, and—and the great work that you're doing

1
2 giving back to your community, and we thank you very
3 much, and we wish you all the very best, and we look
4 forward to working with you to identify where the
5 needs are, and advocating for the resources to go to
6 where the need is. Okay, thank you so much. [pause]
7 The next panel Stephen Gramaldi, New York Common
8 Pantry; Jessica Hughson-Andrade, Met Council. Sorry
9 Jessica. [background comments] Jerome Nathaniel and
10 Molly Krzakowski from JASA. [pause] Hi, all.

11 STEPHEN GRIMALDI: Good afternoon. I'm
12 Stephen Grimaldi, the Executive Director of the New
13 York Common Pantry. In New York City 420,000
14 children are food insecure; 15% of the people that
15 visit emergency food programs are seniors and 1.8
16 million people live in poverty. These folks may
17 suffer from poor nutrition, are paid insufficient
18 wages to feed their families, and cover their bills,
19 and there are a few who are perhaps one paycheck away
20 from eviction. They struggle to find good paying
21 jobs and they often live with stigma. Yes, we know
22 that life may sometimes be a struggle, but I ask you
23 should struggle be a life? Last year the New York
24 Common Pantry served close to 400,000 visitors. We
25 partnered with 185 sites across New York City and

1
2 served three million meals and we accessed over \$6
3 million in sources for the people we serve. We know
4 that good food like EFAP food, Emergency Food
5 Assistance Program, training programs and school
6 meals are vital resources, and these programs help
7 people James and Celia, Jeff, Michelle and Rafael.
8 These are people that we serve at the New York Common
9 Pantry. One a U.S. Military veteran, another a
10 mother of two, a homeless man, a working person
11 that's considered the working poor, another a senior
12 citizen. Their stories are detailed in the written
13 testimony that I gave today, and I hope you'll get a
14 chance to read them. Their stories are important and
15 their lives are important, and a testament for how
16 social and resource supports make the difference. I
17 rarely share my personal story, but I want to share
18 it now. I know there was something about this
19 struggle. When I was 15 my father was laid off, and
20 my parents worked four part-time jobs two men and I
21 received discounted lunch because without it I may
22 not have eaten. I struggled with the stigma of being
23 less well off than my classmates, and something that
24 that card made abundantly clear every day. I
25 graduated. I worked two jobs at 65 hours a week both

1 below \$8.00 an hour, and for time I received what was
2 then called food stamps. So I know the fear of
3 having no fallback and no safety net. Nothing to
4 cushion you fall, and I know that people need help
5 during difficult times, and want a hand up. I see
6 the story played out every day across New York City.
7 In our current political climate as New Yorkers we
8 need to remain a beacon of hope and support
9 aspiration, a place where people could attain their
10 dreams and get the support they need, and not become
11 a place where we shut the door on them. Programs
12 like Emergency Food Assistance Program and job
13 training and funding opportunities for so-called
14 able-bodied adults and universal lunch for our
15 children. Those do just that because life may be a
16 struggle, but struggle should not be a life.

18 JESSICA HUGHSON-ANDRADE: Good afternoon.
19 Thank you to Chair Levin and the Committee on General
20 Welfare and to Chair Chin and the Committee on the
21 the Committee on Aging for inviting us to speak
22 today. My name is Jessica Hughson-Andrade. I'm the
23 Director of Benefits Access at Met Council, our
24 Metropolitan Council on Jewish poverty. We've been
25 around for more than four decades and we provide

1
2 wrap-around social services to help people from
3 crisis and bring them to a point of stability. We
4 provide—we have the largest kosher food network in
5 the United States. We provide emergency social
6 services, family violence services, affordable
7 housing, home repairs, benefits enrollment, outreach
8 as well as Holocaust survivor services. In the fight
9 against poverty we serve immigrants, working
10 families, seniors living on fixed incomes, the under-
11 employed and the unemployed, and everyone in need.
12 While our organization is founded on Jewish values,
13 we help everyone with dignity and respect in gaining
14 access to critical supports to help keep them in a
15 path—in a path towards stability. As many of you
16 know, there are approximately 1.3 million New Yorkers
17 that are food insecure. For many of our clients
18 there's also a unique challenge that if they are
19 keeping kosher they—the benefit—the cost of kosher
20 food presents additional challenges whereas most
21 SNAP—SNAP recipients may not be able to purchase food
22 during the last week of the month because their
23 benefits run out. Many families that observe dietary
24 laws run out by the second or the third week. So
25 that's a unique challenge that we do—that we have to

1 address in kind of our food and—and any of our
2 benefits enrollment. I want to share with you a
3 story of one of these food insecure New Yorkers. For
4 many years, a client of ours, David, owned a kosher
5 butcher shop in Borough Park, and on Fridays he would
6 leave out meat on Fridays to help those families that
7 were poor in the neighborhood be able to celebrate
8 the Sabbath with dignity. As a senior,
9 unfortunately, David can no longer work at the
10 butcher shop, and without this income he is now
11 facing rent arrears, and utility shut-offs. He has
12 since decided to stop purchasing kosher proteins or
13 meats because of the high cost of expenses so that he
14 can continue to stay in his home and pay for his
15 utility bills. He reached out to us at Met Council
16 and somebody was able to enroll him into SNAP
17 benefits. Wee also provided him with what we like to
18 call our Comprehensive Hunger Safety Net so we
19 provided him with emergency food cards as well as
20 emergency food services as well. So he's one of
21 thousands of New Yorkers that we serve through our
22 food programs. One thing that we would like to
23 address is that we'd like to thank—first of all, we'd
24 like to applaud HRA for their ability to redesign
25

1
2 Access NYC and make it more accessible for hard to
3 reach families and we also applaud the public/private
4 partnership of Robin Hood and HRA, in--[bell] in
5 reducing the gap between SNAP, WIC and the Earned
6 Income Tax Credit. Thank you for your time today.

7 Good afternoon, Chairman Levin,
8 Chairwoman Chin, and Members of the Committee on
9 General Welfare and the Committee on Aging. My name
10 is Jerome Nathaniel with City Harvest. I'm our
11 Community Engagement Manager from Northwest Queens,
12 which includes Woodside, Astoria, Long Island City or
13 what some of us call Little Manhattan when you take a
14 look at how the skyline has been morphing as of
15 lately. But first off, I just want to really commend
16 the city for their--their efforts especially at these
17 trying times where the future is unclear what the new
18 administration may hold for the people we serve, but
19 what we do know is that programs that New York City
20 has put in place do support the people that we work
21 with, and that it should be strengthened not cut back
22 on. So I just want to echo the sentiments of many
23 people that spoke before me as well as yourself that
24 EFAP is a very crucial program for the pantries that
25 City Harvest with and the soup kitchens. So City

1
2 Harvest which delivers 55 million pounds of food
3 across the five boroughs to 500 different pantries
4 and soup kitchens works with roughly 3.1 million
5 seniors that access our food at any given point
6 during the course of a year. So we know that seniors
7 really rely on the food that's brought through EFAP.
8 We also have different programs that help those
9 seniors when those pantries may not have enough food.
10 So City Harvest was just also a part of that food
11 collaborative through the Helmsley Foundation has
12 mobile markets that go directly to the NYCHA houses,
13 and provides donated produce often times sourced
14 locally. But one of the challenges that we found
15 especially for seniors in the peninsula of Astoria
16 and Long Island City is that they're not just living
17 in a food desert, but they're also living in what we
18 call a transit desert. So I'm here today. I want to
19 offer my testimony—my written testimony that also
20 underlines the barriers of walking anywhere from .3
21 to .8 miles in Northwest Queens to get to the F-
22 Train, the N-Train or the buses on 21st Street.
23 Issues that we may think as peripheral, but it's
24 really directly related to food insecurity when we
25 talk about how people are going to access it through

1
2 transportation design. I also want to highlight the
3 Fresh Program. I will just look at that vert
4 briefly. They have two supermarkets in Northwest
5 Queens, one on Northern Boulevard, one that's being
6 developed with the new high-rise through the-the
7 Derse Organization. We just ask the City Council to
8 really look closely at where they're expanding the
9 Fresh Program to really look at areas that are
10 transit deserts where people don't have a year-round
11 supermarket—I mean a year-round farmers market or
12 have to go walk nearly a mile to get to
13 transportation to get the options of fresh produce,
14 which other people have the luxury of accessing. And
15 with my last ten seconds, I also just want to also
16 underline what's going on with the Universal School
17 Lunch. As we know, many grandparents provide food
18 for the youth, and without the school lunch filling
19 in that barrier, it can really be a strain for
20 seniors as well. Thank you for your time.

21 MOLLY KRAKOWSKI: Hi, good afternoon. My
22 name is Molly Krakowski. I'm the Director of
23 Legislative Affairs at JASA and I want to thank Chair
24 Levin and Chair Chin for today's really important
25 hearing. I'm going to skip through this, but JASA

1 serves 43,000 older adults in a whole range of
2 programs in New York City from home delivered meals,
3 senior centers, NORCs, elder abuse programs,
4 Community Guardian, Adult Protective Services, et
5 cetera. We've talked all morning about all the
6 statistics, but the statistics are really startling,
7 and what I wanted to highlight or jump to is really
8 what does it mean for people who are accessing a
9 meal? Maybe their meal is through a senior center.
10 Maybe their meal is a home delivered meal, but what
11 happens to the rest of their day? Do they have
12 breakfast? Do they have dinner? Do they have
13 anything else on their shelves, and what do we know
14 about these people? You know, we deliver—the
15 combined I had the number here, but it was actually
16 just for one half of it, but between the home
17 delivered meals and the congregate meals at 22 senior
18 centers is a million meals a year. But again, it's—
19 it's only a snapshot of these people, and so we
20 really want to first thank the city for increasing
21 the reimbursement rates a couple of years back in the
22 budget, and for the cost of living adjustment. In
23 this past year we go an additional \$75,000 to help
24 towards the deficit in our budget for home delivered
25

1 meals, and yet we still \$120,000 deficit in just
2 providing city contracted meals, and—and for older
3 adults who are—who are food insecure. And so, we're—
4 we're really looking, and—and I'll move along but,
5 you know, the government relies on the Human Services
6 communities to provide and though these contracts,
7 and government contracts don't fully fund what
8 they're asking all of us to provide. So that's
9 linked to what we're talking about today. It's our
10 concern that there are a lot of people who are not
11 able to adequately provide for those other
12 nutritional needs. We want the city to consider
13 what—what to do about those other two meals. We also
14 want to look at the possibility of including a
15 nutritionist, home visits, somebody who can go
16 alongside the—sort of the contract. What we've done
17 with our home care, JASA Home Care we have 1,000
18 people who have JASA Home Care Services, and we just
19 got funding for a nutritionist who's going to be
20 going out and doing home visits to 150 of the people
21 who we think are more vulnerable or higher risk
22 clients, but this gives somebody an actual
23 opportunity to open up the refrigerator and look on a
24 shelf. Just because somebody is a client doesn't
25

1
2 mean that there's a social worker going out there on
3 any regular basis. So, you know, with-with-I'll-I'll
4 sum up. I have a bunch of different examples in
5 here, but we do think in this new age with apps and
6 all sorts of different tools at our fingertips the
7 city should be able to make links between the-the
8 various food banks, and think about food service
9 delivery to people who maybe aren't able to get out.
10 Maybe they're in high-rise, a walk-up or maybe
11 there's--there are other barriers. So anything that
12 we can do to be helpful and to be referred as
13 involving. (sic)

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I want to thank this
15 panel both for bringing the important issues that
16 you've brought up through your testimony to this
17 committee, and we look forward to working with you to
18 establish budget priorities to the Council's
19 Preliminary Budget Response, and negotiations with
20 the Administration through the Executive Budget and
21 the Adopted Budget of the spring, but also for the--
22 for the good work that--that you all are doing out in
23 the field in ensuring that--that people that need the
24 assistance are able to get the assistance and that
25 they have--they're met with compassion, and respect

1 and that is so important to the delivery of services.

2 So thank you very much. The final panel. Sudah
3 Acharya, South Asian Council for Social Services;
4 Maggie Dickinson, CUNY and Barbara Hart, Hunger Free
5 NYC. [pause]

6 SUDAH ACHARYA: [off mic] Good afternoon-

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You have to turn on
8 the microphone. The red light will be on.

9 SUDAH ACHARYA: [on mic] Is it? Okay,
10 thank you. Thank to the two Chairs for giving us
11 this opportunity. We apologize that we don't have
12 printed testimony. As far as food pantries are
13 concerned we are the--this new kid on the block. We
14 came here and we continued your commitment or to our
15 advocacy of hunger and to food security that we
16 heard the other panels, and we are inspired to speak
17 and tell our story. I'm Sudah Acharya. I am from
18 South Asian Council for Social Services. We are
19 located in Flushing, Queens, but our clients come
20 from all over Queens as well as from Manhattan,
21 Brooklyn and the Bronx. We have been connecting
22 people doing applications for--for staff and other
23 benefits. We have been seeing hunger and food
24 insecurity among our communities, South Asian
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2 communities as well as other immigrant communities
3 who come to us. But it so happened that we would
4 tell them especially the South Asians, you go to this
5 temple on Thursday, and you go to another place for
6 food, and it will—some of the places are Friday for
7 them, too, and it and it so happened that one
8 terminally ill cancer patient came to us, and she
9 said all I need is some rice and dabs, you know, it's
10 what's this and some spices and milk and vegetables.
11 I will cook my own food. We've bent very back for
12 her. While we are arranging food for her, these
13 efforts was that we should start a salvation food
14 pantry, and we did start it last July with some extra
15 expenses. We're very grateful to the support that
16 New York City Food Assistance program is giving us,
17 gave to us and to EFAP as to us with Queens
18 Delegation for supporting us. Their collaborative
19 gave us so much support. The van and a basement,
20 which we couldn't use at all. It's now innovated and
21 it looks like a full fledged pantry. We have a
22 freezer and dresser (sic) and so on, but the number
23 of people who are coming to us it's amazing. Every
24 week the numbers are increasing. There are people
25 who have five people or seven people in their family,

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2 and only one person works, or nobody works in the
3 family. So it—it is a rather touching, but we're
4 already—to we've improved, but he is very concerned
5 that the EFAP funding has been cut, and we urge that
6 the City Council does all in its part to make sure
7 that is—this—this doesn't happen, and also that it is
8 baselined. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

9 MAGGIE DICKINSON: [coughs] Hi, my name
10 is Maggie Dickinson. I'm a professor at CUNY, at
11 Guttman Community College, and I have done research
12 on food insecurity and hunger in New York City for
13 several years. I want to focus today on the ABAWD
14 restriction, and speak a little bit more specifically
15 about what's going to happen on April 1st in New York
16 City as the inevitable increase in hunger and food
17 insecurity that we're going to be seeing both this
18 year and as these waivers get lifted in the city.
19 Here in New York, some of you may not know, we have a
20 special relationship [coughs] with these policies
21 under Mayor Bloomberg. He refused to accept the
22 national labor when we had the, you know, during the
23 Great Recession. So in New York City we are one of
24 the only places where these work restrictions and
25 time limits on SNAP were enforced. I happened to be

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2 doing research at that time so I saw what happened
3 when people lose their SNAP benefits up close and
4 personal while I was doing that work and thankfully
5 Mayor de Blasio has reversed the policy of enforcing
6 ABAWD restrictions citywide. But as the economy is
7 improving, the federal—the federal waivers are no
8 longer—we're no long able to have them. They were
9 lost in Lower Manhattan, and I think in this year
10 what we're going to see is that most of Queens as
11 well is going to lose the waiver. And those ABAWD
12 restrictions are going to have to be enforced in some
13 way. So, I know the focus today is on seniors and,
14 of course, seniors are exempted from ABAWD
15 restrictions, but I just wan to tell one quick story
16 because what we also know is that people don't let
17 their people go hungry when they lose SNAP benefits.
18 When I was doing my research there a—a 48-year-old
19 man named Jesus Garcia who came to see me when he
20 lost his SNAP benefits. He lived with his elderly
21 mother. He was unemployed. It was during the
22 Recession. He was looking for a job. He had a
23 terrible time finding work. So what happened, of
24 course, is that he ate off of his mother's food
25 stamps and his mom's Social Security. Both of them

1 started coming to the food pantry on a weekly basis.
2 He started eating at soup kitchens more often to take
3 the burden off of his mom. He was in a better
4 position than any of the people I met. During the
5 time I was doing research, he was off from SNAP. I
6 think it was ABAWD. Often times people would be
7 doubling up in apartments. When they lost access to
8 food assistance they could not longer contribute to
9 the households where they were staying. People lost
10 housing. This is an either further drain on city
11 resources and community resources that have to pick
12 up the slack when families can't do it, and SNAP is
13 cut. So, of course, there's a few things that you,
14 the City Council can do. One is to make sure that
15 people in that ABAWD category, you know, support the
16 work that HRA has already been doing to get them into
17 appropriate workforce development part, and
18 educational programs. Those are ways for them to
19 avoid being cut off entirely from SNAP, and HRA has
20 been doing an amazing job on this, but the problem is
21 going to get worse. And the second is obviously to
22 continue [coughs] to support EFAP because when people
23 do lose benefits as you know they will, that is the
24 next line of defense. Thank you.
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2 BARBARA HART: Hello. Okay. [coughs]
3 Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Thank you all
4 for coming to this very important meeting concerning
5 SNAP benefits and food insecurity for those who are
6 in need. My name is Barbara Hart of Staten Island.
7 I am a member of Hunger Free America Food Action
8 Board since 2013. I met Philomena at COJO's Pantry
9 on Staten Island, which Mr. Cohen was here a little
10 earlier. He left. He's the Director of that pantry,
11 and I also do service there. I've been with him for
12 like three year also. I volunteer twice a week
13 there. Philomena brought her presentation to the
14 pantry, and she informed the residents on SNAP
15 benefits, increase income wages, Breakfast in the
16 Classroom, just to name a few. I have advocated for
17 many families as well as other by going to Albany,
18 Washington, Virginia to help make a difference for
19 all. This is the only way we can make a positive
20 change by coming together and fight for justice. In
21 2016, my son got a job that he may—that he may work
22 three to four days a week, and sometimes only one
23 day. I was receiving \$498 before he worked. Now, I
24 receive \$10. Today, I have no choice but to hit
25 those pantries four to five times a week. Food

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2 pantries are a good resource, but SNAP is one step
3 up. Eating health goes a long way. We need our
4 leaders and legislators—legislators to meet the
5 needs of people, and with that you'll be hearing my
6 comment. That's it. Hold on. I'm getting there.
7 Okay. Stop hunger today. New York City is under
8 hunger free America. If you're not, there's no Ponza
9 (sic). Our legislation done that. Oh, yes, indeed
10 consumba. Thank God you guys don't Ponza. Let's
11 make a change, no blunder. We all are here for
12 funda. So it makes so with oneza. Won't leave this
13 place with sunda. Such a food day. I wonder. Stop
14 hunger today. Thank you. [applause]

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That was great. I—I—
16 [coughing] that great space end today's hearing. I
17 want to thank you all of for the work that you're
18 doing. The work that you're doing in—in Queens is—is
19 remarkable, and with that wishing that—the program
20 there is very, very impressive. So thank you. Dr.
21 Dickinson, I wanted to ask about [coughs] a question
22 that I asked the Administration about the ABAWD
23 Waiver. They said that they were—that—that up to now
24 there—nobody has been impacted or they've—they've
25 gotten exemptions from—I didn't quite get that. Can

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2 you explain maybe a little bit about what they're
3 doing?

4 MAGGIE DICKINSON: Yeah, so last year the
5 waiver only applied, as I said, to Lower Manhattan.
6 HRA was able to find ways to either get exemptions
7 and there are all kinds of exemptions. When people
8 are caring for an elderly parent they can be exempted
9 from the work requirement. If they are, you know,
10 caring for—the vacancies that they need—needed in the
11 home to care—care for someone else. If they have
12 health problems they can get a health exemption.
13 Then they can also, you know, if they are enrolled in
14 education, then that can become an exemption from the
15 work rule. So I think what they were able to do was
16 to work with the people who were affected by that
17 rule to find ways to get them exemptions to worker
18 claim. They were able to do that I believe because
19 it was a small area, and as unemployment goes down in
20 the city, and these waivers are revoked for larger
21 geographical areas, that's really much harder for HRA
22 to do. Like I said, I can't say enough good things
23 about the work that HRA has done on this.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.
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2 MAGGIE DICKINSON: They've really been
3 phenomenal. Even the question you were asking before
4 about the across the street and all of that, that's
5 their way of making sure that less people are
6 affected by this federal policy.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure.

8 MAGGIE DICKINSON: The federal policy in
9 this I would love for people to be speaking out about
10 that to get this overturned at the federal level, but
11 the current funding penalty [laughs] I think it will
12 be—we're probably going the other way. So that's my
13 understanding, but my concern is that going forward
14 as more people are impacted, our communities full
15 that for them. (sic)

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It's much harder to
17 do.

18 MAGGIE DICKINSON: They are going to do
19 it, yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We've got to keep an
21 eye on this.

22 MAGGIE DICKINSON: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I want to thank this
24 panel, and ask my co-chair--

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CHAIRPERSON CHIN: Yeah, I just also want to thank this panel. It's always good to hear that-- the South Asian Food Pantry. So we're looking forward to really help to make sure that we can get more support for that, and I also want to thank all the advocates or the organizations for coming out today because this is a critical issue, and we want to make sure that we stop hunger in New York City. So thank you all for your great work.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you all very much for your testimony, and for attending today's hearing. I look forward to working with all of you in the months ahead to ensure that we have an equitable budget here in New York City that reflects the values that have been expressed today at this hearing. I want to thank you all, and have a wonderful, wonderful day and now at 1:53 p.m. this hearing is adjourned. [gavel]

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON AGING

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date February 6, 2017