



**Department of
Social Services**

Human Resources
Administration
Department of
Homeless Services

**Testimony of Jill Berry, First Deputy Commissioner
New York City Department of Social Services**

**Before the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
Oversight, Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City Hearing
May 29, 2024**

Good morning. My name is Jill Berry and I serve as the First Deputy Commissioner at the Department of Social Services (DSS). I would like to thank Deputy Speaker Ayala and the members of the Committee on General Welfare for holding today's hearing on Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City.

There are many faces of food insecurity: a child going to school hungry in the morning, a parent laying awake at night wondering how they'll put the next meal on the table, a pregnant person seeking nutritious options as a part of their diet to foster healthy prenatal development. Because food security intersects with so many aspects of our well-being, it is essential that our City continue to build on efforts to be a strong partner in aiding food insecure households.

DSS serves as an integral part of a safety net that includes the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and the Mayor's Office of Food Policy, as well as a panoply of community stakeholders including neighborhood older adult centers, our houses of worship, and community-based organizations. Collectively, this array of institutions participate in tackling the challenge of food insecurity. Our shared commitment stems from our understanding that everyone deserves the peace of mind that comes with food security.

If anyone listening is facing food insecurity, know there is help available. You can call 311 or visit foodhelp.nyc.gov to find nearby food pantries and community kitchens. Access HRA, our mobile app, and our Benefits Access Centers serve as further resources where clients can apply for benefits. I also want to take this opportunity to encourage those clients receiving SNAP to learn more about the DOHMH food access initiatives including: Health Bucks, Half Off Farm Box, Get the Good Stuff, and Groceries to Go. All assist in strengthening a network of healthy food options for New Yorkers.

The Department of Social Services is responsible for administering programs crucial to uplifting food security. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps approximately 1.8 million New Yorkers access nutritious food. The Community Food Connection (CFC) funds 699 food pantries and community kitchens across the five boroughs. CFC served more than 25.9 million people (duplicated) in FY 2024. The CFC model has created added flexibility for providers to distribute the mix of foods that best meet the needs of the communities they serve including fresh produce, Halal certified proteins and Kosher certified foods, among many other options.

As highlighted by Mayor Adams earlier this year, DSS is happy to report that we have functionally eliminated the previously reported backlogs of Cash Assistance and SNAP applications that peaked at more than 50,000 combined cases, ensuring low-income New Yorkers can quickly and easily access the federal benefit for which they qualify. Investments in staffing, technology, and process improvements has reduced the backlog of cases by 99 and 92 percent, respectively. In total, DSS processed more than 600,000 Cash Assistance and SNAP applications during this period. Faced with a record number of applications as federal pandemic-related support expired, DSS deployed a robust plan to process outstanding applications quickly and make it easier for low-income New Yorkers to access critical benefits. DSS hired nearly 1,000 new staff since January 2023 to process both Cash Assistance and SNAP applications, doubled down on training for staff, and strengthened remote application processes to make it easier to apply for benefits. This achievement could not have been completed without the hard work of our dedicated staff who service millions of New Yorkers every day.

Outreach is an essential component of our work – we have a responsibility to not only make assistance available but make New Yorkers aware that the City is a partner in food security. To that end, the DSS Office of Community Outreach (OCO) conducts targeted outreach campaigns to organizations serving specific populations, including older adults, the LGBTQI community, persons with disabilities, and immigrant communities. OCO conducts presentations and attends resource fairs, farmers markets, and other events to increase SNAP awareness and engagement. In addition, DSS works through various channels to educate the public about SNAP benefits to maximize the City's use of available federal programs to increase the purchasing power of low-income New Yorkers. OCO also provides SNAP trainings and presentations, prescreens potentially eligible applicants, and assists with the SNAP application process. As I mentioned at the start of my testimony: New Yorkers in need of assistance should call 311, visit foodhelp.nyc.gov to find nearby food pantries and community kitchens, or reach us through Access HRA or our Benefits Access Centers. New Yorkers can also be connected to a community-based organization (CBO) to get help with SNAP enrollment, as well as other benefits, by calling 311 or visiting the HRA website ("Find a Partner Organization" <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hra/partners/find-a-partner-organization.page>). In addition, DSS participates in monthly SNAP Task Force meetings, chaired by Food Bank for New York City, to provide updates and answer questions from participating CBOs.

In 2023, DSS conducted a total of eighty-one trainings, which included 1,730 attendees, in using these tools to submit SNAP and other benefit applications; and provide benefit case management via Access HRA. Training attendees include staff from other municipal agencies and community partner organizations, including older adult center staff. These trainings were also a forum for questions and concerns from providers and advocates working directly with HRA and DHS clients, including older adults.

We must also recognize the challenge of pursuing innovative solutions and approaches in an environment that is severely constrained by stringent federal and State regulations. As the administrator of multibillion dollar social services programs, DSS is obligated to adhere to the rubrics set out by State and federal authorities.

One of the more recent and successful collaborations across levels of government has been the response to the theft of SNAP benefits commonly referred to as skimming. Skimming occurs when unscrupulous actors tamper with retail credit card swipe machines and are able to syphon off vital SNAP funds from local clients. In response to the high number of instances stolen funds, DSS worked with our partners on the State and Federal level to create a reimbursement program to assist the clients who rely on these funds. As of May 22nd, 2024, DSS has approved the reimbursement of over 82,000 SNAP claims amounting to more than \$26M in restored benefits. Approved replacement benefits have consistently been added to client EBT cards within 3 days of determination. We look forward to continued collaboration with our State and federal partners to ensure EBT cards are suited with the highest level of security to protect the clients who rely on these benefits. Currently there are proposals to add chip technology to the EBT cards, similar to your average credit card, which will prevent this type of skimming theft. We are supportive of these proposals and are in ongoing conversations with our partners in government to advance this effort.

As the largest social service agency in the nation, it would be criminal of me not to highlight the importance of the federal Farm Bill currently being reviewed and evaluated in Congress. Among several provisions included in this dense piece of legislation, this bill enables the SNAP funds that 1.8 million New Yorkers rely on. Any discussion or entertainment of a cut to the SNAP program would be catastrophic, and put millions at risk of food insecurity including 560,000 children and 530,000 above the age of 60. One in Three New York City renters experience food insecurity. More than half of New Yorkers experiencing food hardship also reported facing health problems. It is essential that this already limited subsidy get maintained at current funding levels or better yet improved. The Adams Administration are actively collaborating with our partners in government as well as the advocacy community to ensure this vital resource is available to New Yorkers in need of food. We encourage the City Council and any other stakeholders to join us advocating for this essential tool in fighting food insecurity.

Shifting to the legislation noticed for this hearing, DSS is reviewing Introduction 28 and is committed to working with our State and Federal partners to improve income and employment verification. We agree on the need to utilize tools to facilitate the process of eligibility determination and client information verification; that is why, presently, DSS engages with external databases and State government partners.

We welcome an opportunity to discuss this legislation with its sponsors further, especially as to what further third-party verification systems or interfaces the bill envisions, and the benefits that would accrue to applicants, clients, and/or the City in using these further third-party verification systems. We stand ready to pursue any additional technologies or tools that facilitate connecting New Yorkers with the benefits and services they rely upon.

Our work as the largest social services agency in the country would not be possible without the generosity, partnership, and commitment of countless fellow New Yorkers. Thank you to the hard-working staff at DSS/HRA/DHS and all across government and our community partners who dedicate their lives to servicing the most vulnerable. Special thanks to the Council and this committee for your support and sustained advocacy on this critical issue.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify and welcome your questions.

Thank you.

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OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

**City Council Committee on General Welfare
Oversight Hearing – Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City
May 29, 2024**

Good morning, Chair Ayala, and thank you for holding this very important hearing today. I am here to speak on behalf of Antonio Reynoso, Borough President of Brooklyn, where according to the [New York State Department of Health](#), 30% of adults reported facing food insecurity last year.

Access to fresh and healthy food is crucial to maintain health throughout one's life. Without it, these 30% of Brooklynites may be experiencing higher rates of chronic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, mental health concerns such as anxiety and depression, and difficulty concentrating on everyday tasks.

Last year, our office published The Comprehensive Plan for Brooklyn, which examines the intersection between land use, allocation of resources, policy, and public health. Analyzing data across multiple metrics, the Plan identified patterns in which low-income neighborhoods of color are less likely to have access to safe and affordable housing, reliable transportation, quality educational and employment opportunities, active recreation, preventative health services, and healthy food.

The maps below, from The Comprehensive Plan, show those patterns clearly as they are related to food access. Map 1 shows food insecurity in the borough, defined as a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life. Coney Island, Gravesend, and Brownsville have the highest percentage of food-insecure households in the borough (ranging between 20% and 27%). These geographies also correlate to neighborhoods with the highest share of households receiving Supplementary Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) benefits. While Coney Island and Gravesend, where almost half of residents report having limited English proficiency, are surrounded by community districts that are significantly more food-secure, Brownsville is part of a larger pattern of food insecurity in central and eastern Brooklyn.

Map 2 addresses access to healthy food. When discussing food and healthy living habits with stakeholders, one phrase frequently came up: food deserts, which are typically defined as areas where it is difficult to buy affordable healthy groceries. Brooklynites felt that the traditional metric of food insecurity was opaque or did not respond to observed conditions in their

neighborhoods. DOHMH publishes its own measure of unhealthy food access, based on the ratio of bodegas to supermarkets in each community district. By this measure, central and southwestern Brooklyn stand out, with as many as 19 bodegas to a single supermarket.

These trends tend to align with the parts of the borough receiving SNAP benefits, shown in Map 3. While access to SNAP is extremely important to address hunger, the Human Resources Administration [failed to process applications in a timely manner](#) for the last three years, leaving many New Yorkers having to make difficult choices about their household expenditures. Additionally, [recent surveys](#) have shown that many immigrant families may avoid enrolling in benefit programs due to a now-reversed Trump-era “public charge rule” that took reliance on benefits into account in applications for green cards and visas.

Even when New Yorkers do get SNAP, according to a recent [report](#) by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), many still struggle to afford fresh fruits and vegetables. Additionally, NRDC found that many SNAP recipients are not aware of or don’t understand how to use incentive programs, such as NYC’s Health Bucks and Get the Good Stuff, which can help them access free and low-cost fruits and vegetables at local farmers’ markets and grocery stores.

To use these benefits, recipients must be able to access farmers’ markets and participating grocery stores, and our analysis shows a mismatch between availability and need. Overlaying the SNAP Assistance map with NYC Farmers’ Markets (from DOHMH data) in Map 4, we see large swaths of the borough where SNAP usage is high and no farmers’ markets are available, for example in South Williamsburg, Flatbush, Coney Island, and Borough Park.

Our Comprehensive Plan makes a number of recommendations about how to address food insecurity and access in the borough, which I will summarize here. The administration, and all of us in a position to address this issue should:

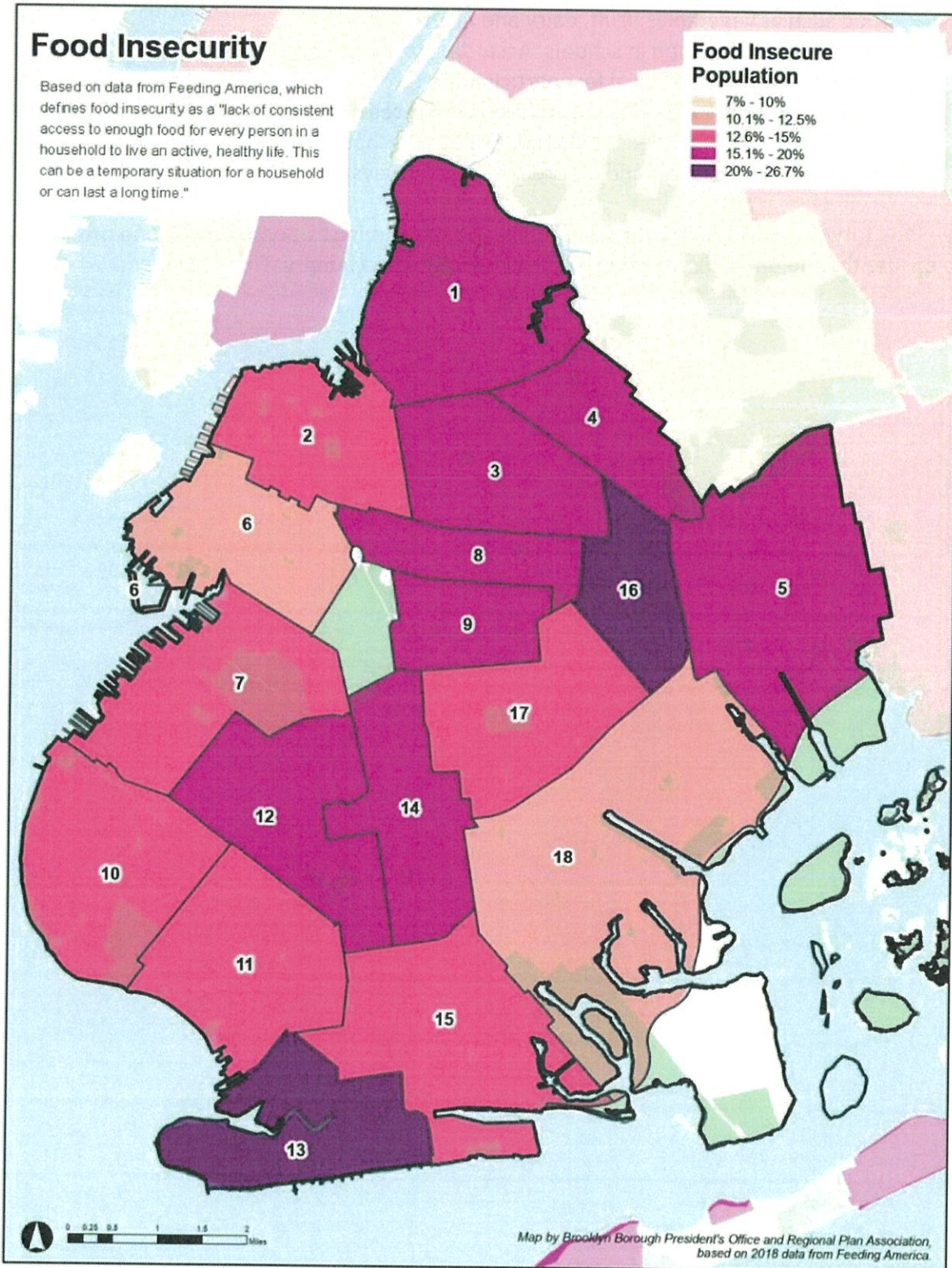
- Use a data-driven approach to siting City food access programs, and work with community-based organizations to develop food hubs that deliver local produce to institutions and households;
- Support food rescue programs, which not only help address hunger, but also keep food waste out of landfills. The administration should better promote the DonateNYC platform, which is already set up to support this;
- Fund community-based organizations to assist with SNAP applications and undertake linguistically appropriate outreach to inform their communities – including immigrants, older adults, and students – about the availability of and how to participate in these incentive and other available food assistance programs;
- Support food pantries and soup kitchens. [As of 2020](#), one in five NYC children rely on them, as do unhoused and migrant families, and it is important that these facilities receive adequate support to offer both dignified hot meals and fresh food. Yet many are unfortunately forced to turn people away because of a mismatch between demand and availability of food. The administration and the Council can use capital funding to help

food pantries meet the need for refrigeration so that more pantries can distribute fresh food such as vegetables, fruit, dairy and protein; and

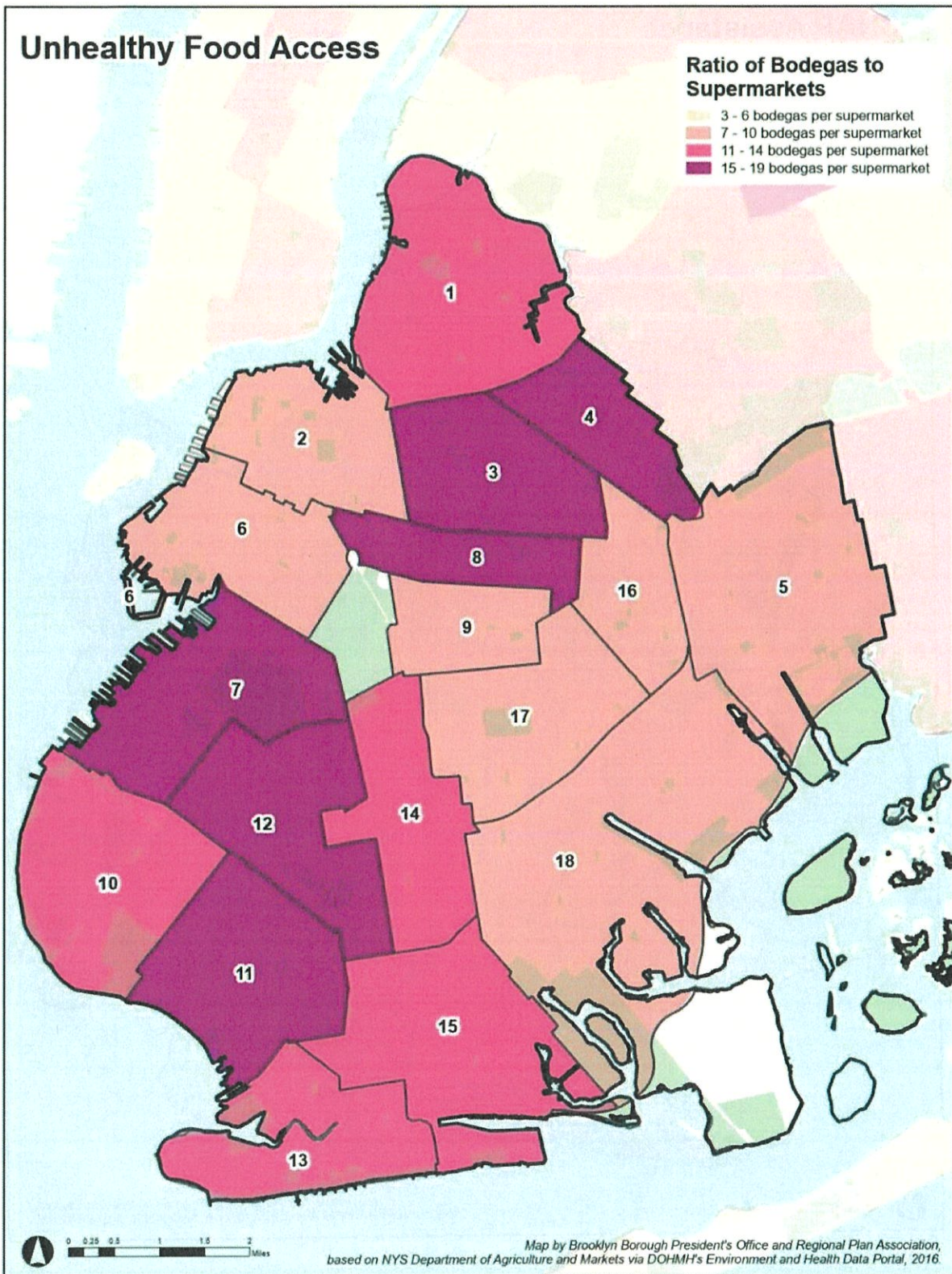
- Improve access to food in schools. According to the [Food Research & Action Center](#), DOE has the lowest school breakfast participation rate of any of the big city school districts in the U.S., with about half of the children who receive school lunches not receiving school breakfasts. The DOE needs to do more to ensure that breakfast is provided in first period classrooms and as grab-and-go breakfast in hallways before the first period.

We look forward to working with the Council and the administration on these and other efforts to ensure that no one in Brooklyn or in the city goes to bed hungry. Thank you.

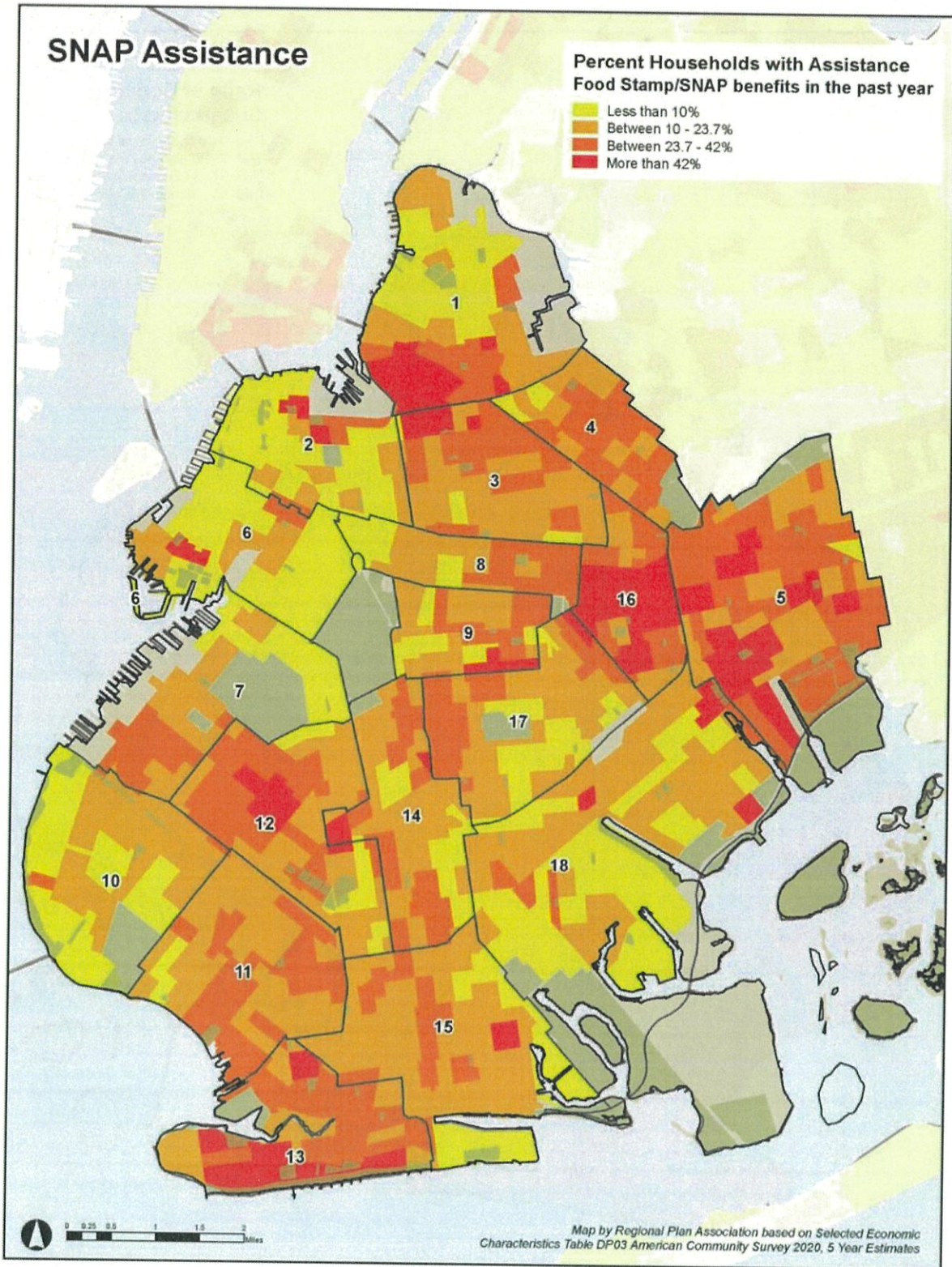
Map 1



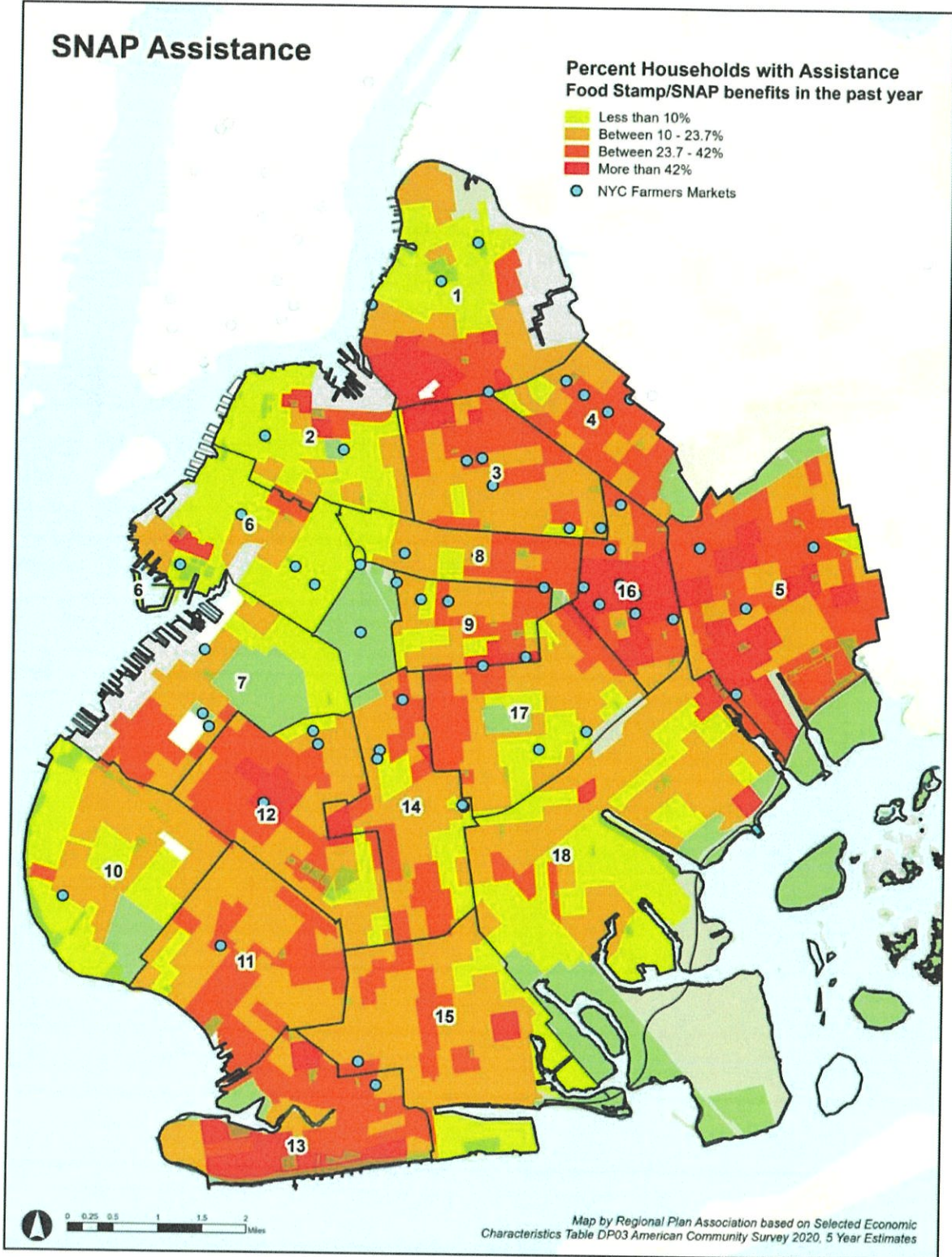
Map 2



Map 3



Map 4





TESTIMONY OF CITYMEALS ON WHEELS

**Before the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
Honorable Diana Ayala, Chair**

Oversight – Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City

May 29, 2024

**Submitted by:
Jeanette Estima
Director, Policy and Advocacy
Citymeals on Wheels**

Citymeals on Wheels works in partnership with the City and the network of meal providers to fill a significant gap in the City’s home-delivered meals program by funding the delivery of meals on weekends and holidays. In addition, Citymeals has become a citywide emergency food responder for homebound older adults, beginning with 9/11 and continuing to the present day. In FY23, Citymeals provided over 2 million meals to 22,000 older adults in all five boroughs.

This testimony will focus on key findings from recent research Citymeals completed that demonstrates the urgent need for increased funding and expanded nutrition programs to better address food insecurity among older New Yorkers.

Background

In the City today there are 1.8 million people aged 60 and older.¹ An increasing number are immigrants, women, and people living alone with limited social support; 18 percent live below the poverty line.² The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic have compounded these challenges, dramatically increasing food costs that persist to this day. As a result, we have seen food insecurity among older New Yorkers emerge as an urgent crisis.

The two main food programs targeting older New Yorkers generally provide one prepared meal on weekdays only; one program operates in a congregate setting at Older Adult Centers, and the other provides home-delivery of these meals to those who cannot regularly get to a center. Last year, 146,119 older New Yorkers attended an older adult center and 27,547 received home-delivered meals (HDM).³ These food programs were established in 1965 through the Older Americans Act, which still only requires that they serve one meal a day, five days a week. We have long known that this falls short in meeting the needs of the most food insecure older adults who cannot regularly access additional food. In a national survey from 2018, 66 percent of home-delivered and 54 percent of congregate meal recipients reported that these meals provide half or more of their daily food intake.⁴

Here in the City, Citymeals privately fundraises in order to ensure that home-delivered meals recipients receive a meal 7 days a week. But this still leaves too many older adults hungry. About 15 years ago Citymeals learned that 14% of our meal recipients relied on the one meal they received each day. More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a lasting impact on food security in the City, and across the country. While other food programs such as SNAP and food pantries are available and used by many older adults, they were not designed to meet the

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. 2022. Population 60 Years and Over in the United States. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0102. Accessed at:

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S0102?q=S0102&g=160XX00US3651000>

² Ibid.

³ Preliminary Mayor's Management Report. January 2024. Accessed at:

<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/dfta.pdf>

⁴ Administration on Community Living. FY18 Older Americans Act Report to Congress. Accessed at:

https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/about-acl/2021-06/ACL_FY2018%20OAA%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf

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needs of the most vulnerable older adults who are not regularly able to shop for groceries, prepare food, or cook their own meals. We had anecdotal evidence that hunger was on the rise among the older adults we serve, so we partnered with the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute to better understand their unmet needs.

Our mixed methods study took place over most of 2023, and included an analysis of public data, a survey, and four focus groups (including a virtual group with HDM recipients). We worked with our partners to recruit a demographically diverse convenience sample of 500 older adults 60 years old and over, across 4 boroughs, who use either older adult center or home-delivered meals programs. We looked at the top languages spoken by older New Yorkers and conducted surveys in English, Spanish, mandarin, Cantonese, and Russian. The study oversamples non-English speakers and HDM recipients, groups that are typically underrepresented in existing research.

Key Findings

Our study documented a high rate of food insecurity among older New Yorkers, with ***nearly half of all respondents “sometimes” or “often” experiencing indicators of food insecurity.***

Researchers used 2 validated USDA food insecurity screener questions that ask: in the past 12 months it was never, sometimes, or often true that:

1. We worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.
2. The food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more.

Overall, 48% of respondents reported that they “sometimes” or “often” worry about whether their food would run out before they had money to buy more. This number went up to 60% for HDM recipients. Similarly, 42% of all respondents and 54% of HDM recipients reported that “sometimes” or “often” the food they bought just didn't last.

We asked participants to tell us how they felt about their home-delivered and congregate meals programs and while they generally rated the programs highly, many indicated that they require more food and more choice and variety in what they receive. As one participant said, the service is “*appreciated, but just not enough.*” While some comments focused on the size of

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the portions, many indicated that they simply needed more food. The current amount they receive means they must *“do my own little thing in between to fill the gap.”* When asked to imagine a new HDM program, **52% of all respondents said that it should provide two or more meals per day.** For example, one person suggested providing *“cereals or something for breakfast to help get your stomach full right away at the start of the day.”*

Survey participants experienced a number of challenges getting groceries and preparing meals. First, affordability was a clear barrier with **65% of respondents reporting incomes of \$15,000 or less.** With extremely low incomes, “filling the gap” with food they purchase is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Getting to the grocery store is also difficult, with half walking to the store and having an average of a 40-minute walk round trip—which doesn’t include the time and effort to shop and wait in line. This can easily become overwhelming for an older adult if they’re not feeling well or in bad weather. **About 24% of respondents said they were only “sometimes” able to shop for groceries, and 17% are “never” able to do so.**

We saw similar responses to questions about preparing and cooking food. **About 38% said they were only “sometimes” or “never” able to wash, chop, or otherwise prepare food to be cooked, and 37% said they are only “sometimes” or “never” able to cook at home.** It’s important to note that these responses are not being driven by the oversampling of HDM recipients. When looking only at OAC participants, nearly the same percentage of people reported that shopping and preparing/cooking meals was challenging, or not possible for them.

These findings may shed some light on the extremely low food-program utilization reported by the older adults we surveyed. **We asked survey respondents about their use of SNAP and food pantries and found that only 56% reported receiving SNAP benefits and only 18% had used a food pantry.** While this is twice the rate of SNAP utilization among all older New Yorkers, it is much lower than it should be given the extremely low incomes they reported. One third of those receiving SNAP said it was not enough to meet their needs, and of those not receiving SNAP 55% said they did not know if they were eligible. When asked about their use of food pantries, one respondent said *“I can only access them when there are volunteers that bring it to*

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me.” Given the extremely low incomes and high levels of food insecurity reported, these low rates of SNAP and food pantry utilization suggest a serious disconnect in the need and the services available to older adults. Survey respondents noted the usual challenges people experience with regard to SNAP, such as insufficient benefits, complicated application and renewal processes, etc. but it is also clear that SNAP and food pantries are simply not accessible for the 40% of people who reported challenges getting to grocery stores or preparing and cooking their own meals.

Barriers to access can be mitigated with support from family, friends, or a personal care attendant, but we learned that 45% do not have that support. Moreover, 85% of those surveyed live alone. We cannot expect, then, that older adults can easily get assistance in accessing these other food programs.

Despite its limitations, we also found a significant, direct positive correlation between receiving home-delivered meals and food security and quality of life. Among home-delivered meal recipients:

- **90% report home-delivered meals help them to not be hungry**
- **87% state that the meals help them remain in their own homes**
- **85% state that the meals help them eat more healthily**
- **81% report that the program helps them manage one or more health conditions**

While the existing systems for providing food to older New Yorkers are in dire need of revitalization, the successes of the HDM program show the promise and potential of this infrastructure to provide targeted anti-hunger interventions at a larger scale.

Conclusion

Older adults must no longer be an afterthought in the development of anti-hunger strategies. We need to look at all food programs at the city, state, and federal levels, and do more to ensure that they are accessible to older adults and present a comprehensive approach to hunger. This includes expanded funding for SNAP through the Farm Bill, the ability to use SNAP for hot meals, and extending benefits to all immigrants, especially undocumented older adults.

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It is also critical that the City adequately support the two programs that get food directly to older adults. Citymeals works hand-in-hand with congregate and HDM providers to ensure that older adults are able to eat at the very least one meal every day. On average, the City's contracted providers of home-delivered meals have seen food costs increase by about 25% and fuel costs by about 7%. However, NYC Aging's latest RFP indicates a flat per-meal reimbursement rate. To that end, **we urge the City to allocate \$12 million to increase the per meal reimbursement rate for home-delivered meals programs to \$15.31 per meal.**

Moreover, we need expanded funding for food pantries, and in particular mobile food pantries. Mayor Adams's most recent budget effectively cuts Community Food Connection (CFC) funding by almost half. CFC supplies nutritious and fresh food to nearly 700 organizations across the city, and is a vital source of food for the community-based programs who serve over 1 million New Yorkers each year. Citymeals has a small program, funded in part through CFC, that enables us to provide fresh produce deliveries to about 2,500 older New Yorkers, and given the results of our study, we hope to at least double the number of people receiving our produce bags in the coming year. These deliveries mean so much to our recipients as they are unable to access fresh produce in other ways. There are very few mobile food pantries in the City, and cuts like this not only endanger the health of 1 million New Yorkers, they also stem innovations and expansions that could make the programs more effective. Therefore, **we urge the City to establish baseline funding of \$60 million for the Community Food Connection.**

Finally, we ask the council to help advocate for expanded funding and additional meals provided through the Older Americans Act. The HDM program is largely funded through City dollars, with the State and Federal governments contributing only 9.3% and 19% respectively. The booming of the older population is a national and global phenomenon, and the City alone cannot fully address the rapidly increasing needs it presents. The Older Americans Act must be expanded to meaningfully address hunger by providing additional meals when needed and it must be adequately funded.

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CATHOLIC COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

191 Joralemon Street, 2nd Floor, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201

**Testimony of Joseph Rosenberg, Executive Director
Catholic Community Relations Council
New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
Oversight – Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City**

May 29, 2024

Good afternoon, Chair Ayala, and members of the Committee on General Welfare. I am Joseph Rosenberg, the Director of the Catholic Community Relations Council (“CCRC”) representing the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn in New York City on legislative and policy matters.

Thank you for focusing this hearing on such an important and timely topic. Food insecurity and hunger among New York City’s residents is in a crisis situation, and nonprofit human service providers require emergency funding to distribute desperately needed food to the working families, elderly, and children of New York City.

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York and Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens have been providing shelter, food, and clothing to New Yorkers for more than one century, not just during disasters such as Superstorm Sandy and the COVID-19 pandemic, but every day of every year. Both charities combined operate 77 food pantries throughout the 5 boroughs and serve more than 7.4 million meals annually.

All nonprofit human service providers have faced many challenges feeding hungry and needy New Yorkers over the years. Right now, this challenge is at a crisis point. Catholic Charities are not only feeding more working families, seniors, and children at our pantries. Recent clients also include college students and youth aging out of foster care, as well as asylum seekers. The plight of hungry children is particularly heartbreaking, with more than 1 in 4 children in our City now living in poverty. This is why, with more New Yorkers going hungry, we urge that you support our request to include \$20 million in emergency funding for food pantries in the FY’25 New York City Budget. We are not alone in pressing for this much needed relief. We are collaborating closely with the Met Council on Jewish Poverty and the Hispanic Federation on this effort.

While the skyrocketing increase in food insecurity caused by the pandemic has partially subsided, demand remains extremely elevated from pre-pandemic levels with many food pantries seeing an increase in clients by 20% over the last two years. Spurred on by food inflation pricing, clients, as well as the pantries serving them, have all been negatively impacted financially. We all understand that \$10 dollars buys vastly less food than it did as recently as two years ago. At the same time, the end of federal government monies provided during the pandemic has placed tremendous pressures for funding our food distribution programs.

We have all faced many challenges in feeding the hungry of New York City. This time is unfortunately one of them as a near record number of New Yorkers are going hungry.

Because of increased food costs, both Catholic Charities have also found it difficult to provide as much fresh food to clients as in previous years. With more New Yorkers relying upon our pantries, we are often forced to distribute canned products instead of fresh produce to ensure that clients do not leave empty handed.

This combination of a surge in needy clients, high food inflation and loss of federal funding available during the pandemic has created a dire situation where we need your help.

Our mission, and that of all nonprofit human service providers operating food pantries, is to serve needy New Yorkers, and help stem their hunger, while providing them with the healthiest food options possible. Most importantly, all of us must ensure that New Yorkers, especially working families, the young and the elderly, do not go hungry. We therefore call for your support in including this essential \$20 million food pantry emergency funding program in the FY'25 City Budget.

Thank you.

**Testimony of Julia McCarthy, J.D., Senior Program Officer, New York Health Foundation
Submitted to the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
Oversight – Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City**

May 29, 2024

The New York Health Foundation (NYHealth) is a private, independent foundation that seeks to improve the health of all New Yorkers, especially people of color and others who have been historically marginalized. Our *Healthy Food, Healthy Lives* program works to advance policies and programs that link New Yorkers with the food they need to thrive. Our work has provided us with in-depth knowledge of food insecurity’s widespread impact on the health of children, families, and the communities in which they live.

NYHealth has a longstanding commitment to fighting hunger and food insecurity in New York City. Since 2014, we have invested millions of dollars to improve food security across New York State. For example, NYHealth has supported campaigns to improve the quality of food in the emergency food system, to make it easier for individuals to access nutrition benefit programs, and to expand universal school meals across the State. Notably, NYHealth’s investments helped secure universal free school lunch for New York City’s 1.1 million public school children.

Access to nutritious food affects health. Food-insecure New Yorkers are twice as likely as their food-secure counterparts to report poor health.¹ They are also more likely to have lower diet quality, higher rates of diet-related disease, and higher health care costs.^{2,3,4}

Across New York State, access to nutritious food remains a concern for millions of people. NYHealth has conducted a number of analyses to understand food insecurity and its implications for New Yorkers. Our statewide Survey of Food and Health showed how food insecurity is strongly associated with worse health.⁵ Over the past four years, NYHealth has been examining food insufficiency (a more severe, short-term version of food insecurity) in New York State using U.S. Census data. Our most recent analysis shows that, in 2023, food insufficiency in New York was as high as it was at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶ These recent high rates of food insufficiency are likely the result of the end of pandemic-era safety net programs like increased

¹ New York Health Foundation. “NYHealth Survey of Food and Health,” August 2022. <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/nyhealth-survey-of-food-and-health-2022/>, accessed April 2024.

² Morales, M.E.; Berkowitz, S.A. (2016). The relationship between food insecurity, dietary patterns, and obesity. *Current Nutrition Report*. 5(1),54-60.

³ Gregory, C.A.; Coleman-Jensen, A. Food insecurity, chronic disease, and health among working-age adults. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. 2017, No. 235. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84467/err-235.pdf>. Accessed April 2024.

⁴ Berkowitz, S.A.; Basu, S.; Meigs, J.B.; Seligman, H.K. (2018). Food insecurity and health care expenditures in the United States, 2011-2013. *Health Services Research*. 53(3),1600-1620.

⁵ New York Health Foundation. “NYHealth Survey of Food and Health,” August 2022. <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/nyhealth-survey-of-food-and-health-2022/>, accessed April 2024.

⁶ Cobbs, E.; Ford, M.M.; McCarthy, J.; Barrett, A.; Havusha, A.; Sandman, D. (2024). “Still Hungry: Food Insufficiency in New York State 2020-2023,” New York Health Foundation, New York, NY. <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/food-insufficiency-in-new-york-state-2020-2023/>, accessed April 2024.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, expanded Child Tax Credits, and pandemic electronic benefit transfer (P-EBT) payments.

Not only has overall food insufficiency increased in the last two years, but disparities have also widened by race/ethnicity and income level. One in five Black and Hispanic New Yorkers experienced food insufficiency last year—three times the rate for white New Yorkers. Almost one in three New Yorkers in the lowest income bracket (those with annual income of less than \$25,000) experienced food insufficiency, which is 15 times the rate for New Yorkers in the highest income bracket (those with annual income of \$100,000 or more).⁷ These findings show that stronger safety net programs are critical, especially for historically marginalized populations in New York.

In light of this recent data and policy developments, below are recommendations to address food insecurity in New York City:

Ensure timely processing of Nutrition Benefits. Nutrition benefits such as SNAP reduce food insecurity and remain our most effective tool to combat hunger.^{8,9} More than 1.7 million City residents are currently enrolled in the program, but many report obstacles to enrollment.¹⁰ In our 2022 Survey of Food and Health, SNAP recipients reported the need for improvements to the application process and distribution methods.¹¹ Most recently, amidst high rates of food insecurity, SNAP applicants have faced troubling barriers to timely enrollment.¹²

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) considers timely processing rates above 95% as acceptable.¹³ But in fiscal year 2023, New York City only processed approximately 40% of applications on time.¹⁴ The 2024 Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report suggests similarly

⁷ Cobbs, E.; Ford, M.M.; McCarthy, J.; Barrett, A.; Havusha, A.; Sandman, D. (2024). “Still Hungry: Food Insufficiency in New York State 2020-2023,” New York Health Foundation, New York, NY.

<https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/food-insufficiency-in-new-york-state-2020-2023/>, accessed April 2024.

⁸ Zhang, J. Wang, Y. Yen, ST. (2021). “Does Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Reduce Food Insecurity among Households with Children? Evidence from the Current Population Survey.” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 18(6), 3178.

⁹ Abt Associates, Inc. “Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (SEBTC) Demonstration: Summary Report.” U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. May 2016. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/ops/sebtfinalreport.pdf>, accessed April 2024.

¹⁰ The City of New York, Mayor Eric L. Adams. (2024). “Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report.” https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/2024_pmmr.pdf, accessed April 2024.

¹¹ New York Health Foundation. (2023). “A Critical Safety Net: New Yorkers’ Experiences with Food and Nutrition Programs.” <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/a-critical-safety-net-new-yorkers-experiences-with-food-and-nutrition-programs/>, accessed April 2024.

¹² The City of New York, Mayor Eric L. Adams. (2024). “Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report.” https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/2024_pmmr.pdf, accessed April 2024.

¹³ Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack, United States Department of Agriculture, to Governor Kathy Hochul. February 8, 2024. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/NY-SNAP-Performance.pdf>.

¹⁴ The City of New York, Mayor Eric L. Adams. “Mayor’s Management Report.” September 2023. https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2023/2023_mmr.pdf

dismal rates.¹⁵ By contrast, prior to and during the first year of the pandemic, the City’s SNAP processing rates were closer to 90% when caseloads also exceeded 1.6 million people.

Reports in March 2024 that the Human Resources Administration (HRA) had nearly cleared the backlog of SNAP applications, hired nearly 1,000 new staff since last year, and strengthened remote application processes are encouraging. Despite this promising progress, given recent processing data, the City must continue to address barriers to SNAP access and maximize enrollment for eligible New Yorkers, including ensuring that HRA has the staff it needs. New York City should and can regain its position as a national leader in maximizing SNAP enrollment.

Continue to invest in the Community Food Connection program. Many families experiencing food insecurity either do not qualify for nutrition benefits or have remaining needs even with benefits, so they turn to emergency food sources. Annually, 1.4 million New Yorkers rely on the emergency food system, including the City’s Community Food Connection (CFC).¹⁶ The Foundation’s statewide Survey of Food and Health found that, of those who visited a food pantry or bank in 2021, a majority are happy with the food available, and two-thirds report that pantries have food their families like to eat and that the food is of good quality.¹⁷

New York City Food Policy Alliance members, including Equity Advocates, Westside Campaign Against Hunger, and Met Council, have been working to educate officials on the benefits of permanently including fresh produce in the emergency food system. They and other partners successfully advocated for \$30 million in new funds, bringing the City’s total emergency food investment up to \$52 million and allowing it to provide fresh fruits and vegetables permanently.¹⁸ To ensure that New Yorkers continue to have access to fresh foods in times of crisis, the City should continue to support CFC at this increased level.

Guarantee school food is adequately funded. Food insecurity worsens children’s health; it is associated with increased chronic diseases like asthma.¹⁹ And children with uncertain access to food tend to have lower test scores and a greater likelihood of behavioral health problems, including hyperactivity, depression, and anxiety.²⁰ School meals mitigate food insecurity among low-income students and are often the healthiest parts of students’ diets, especially for low-income students. Students who eat school meals consume more fruits and vegetables during mealtimes and have higher quality diets compared to students who do not consume school

¹⁵ The City of New York, Mayor Eric L. Adams. “Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report.” January 2024. https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/2024_pmmr.pdf.

¹⁶ NYHealth. “Equity Advocates,” <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/grantee/equity-advocates-2/>, accessed April 2024.

¹⁷ New York Health Foundation. (2022). “NYHealth Survey of Food and Health” <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/nyhealth-survey-of-food-and-health-2022/>, accessed March 2024.

¹⁸ NYHealth. “Equity Advocates,” <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/grantee/equity-advocates-2/>, accessed April 2024.

¹⁹ Thomas, M.M.C.; Miller, D.P.; Morrissey, T.W. (2019). Food Insecurity and child health. *Pediatrics*. 144(4).

²⁰ Kimbro, R.T.; Denney, J.T. (2015). Transitions into food insecurity associated with behavioral problems and worse overall health among children. *Health Affairs*. 34(11).

meals.^{21,22} Our Survey of Food and Health shows that school meals were the most commonly used food access point for New Yorkers in need during the COVID-19 pandemic.²³

Access to high-quality, culturally responsive, healthy school meals is essential for advancing health equity. In New York City schools, 25% of students are Black and 42% are Hispanic or Latino, but school food often doesn't meet those students' needs and preferences.²⁴ Our statewide analysis shows that, whereas 81% of White families participating in school meals say they approve of the variety of food offered, only 58% of Hispanic families and 45% of Black families approve. Our recent research on food insufficiency also found that, in 2023, food insufficiency rose for Black and Hispanic households across New York State, and that one in eight households with children experienced food insufficiency.²⁵

With growing need, healthy and appealing school meals are a lifeline for families struggling to put food on the table.²⁶ New York City Department of Education's (NYC DOE) Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) has worked relentlessly to implement new approaches to ensure the City's 1.1 million public school students have the food necessary to maximize their health and succeed in school. For example, OFNS and its partner Wellness in the Schools have developed 100 plant-forward, culturally relevant meals that can be cooked from scratch ingredients across all 1,200 New York City public school buildings. Preserving gains to improve food quality is critical. Proposed City budget contractions reflect precarious economic times, which means kids need nutritious school meals more than ever. Proposed cuts in OFNS's budget may mean children don't have continued access to the healthy meals they need to thrive. The City Council has pledged to continue to improve the healthfulness and cultural responsiveness of meals in schools. Making good on that promise means continued support for OFNS to do just that.

Prioritize a successful rollout of the new Summer EBT program. School closures, especially during the summer months, are associated with food insecurity for families.²⁷

²¹ Fox, M.K.; Gearan, E.; Cabili, C.; et al. "School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study, Final Report Volume 4: Student Participation, Satisfaction, Plate Waste, and Dietary Intakes," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support; 2019. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SNMCS-Volume4.pdf>, accessed April 2024.

²² Kinderknecht, K.; Harris, C.; Jones-Smith, J. (2020). Association of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act with Dietary Quality Among Children in the US National School Lunch Program. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 324(4), 359-368.

²³ New York Health Foundation. "NYHealth Survey of Food and Health," August 2022. <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/nyhealth-survey-of-food-and-health-2022/>, accessed April 2024.

²⁴ New York Health Foundation. "NYHealth Survey of Food and Health," August 2022. <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/nyhealth-survey-of-food-and-health-2022/>, accessed April 2024.

²⁵ Cobbs, E.; Ford, M.M.; McCarthy, J.; Barrett, A.; Havusha, A.; and Sandman, D. (2024). "Still Hungry: Food Insufficiency in New York State 2020-2023," New York Health Foundation, New York, NY. <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/food-insufficiency-in-new-york-state-2020-2023/>, accessed April 2024.

²⁶ Cobbs, E.; Ford, M.M.; McCarthy, J.; Barrett, A.; Havusha, A.; and Sandman, D. (2024). "Still Hungry: Food Insufficiency in New York State 2020-2023," New York Health Foundation, New York, NY. <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/food-insufficiency-in-new-york-state-2020-2023/>, accessed April 2024.

²⁷ Poole, K.M.; Fleischhacker, S.E.; Bleich, S.N. (2021). Addressing Child Hunger When School Is Closed — Considerations during the Pandemic and Beyond. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 384(10).

This year, for the very first time, New York families with children will have access to a new federal program, the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer EBT), which will provide low-income families with \$40 in food benefits per student for each month school is closed.

Summer EBT could reduce food insecurity, transportation challenges, and time burdens for New York families, while also increasing local economic activity. For example, a USDA evaluation of a Summer EBT demonstration project found that the program reduces very low food insecurity and increases healthy eating.²⁸

Though the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance will administer the program, NYC DOE and HRA can play an important local role to ensure families understand and use the benefit.

City agencies should implement clear local communication about Summer EBT, which is vital for effective uptake, as families with children already face greater obstacles to get and prepare food.

NYHealth is grateful for the shared recognition of the importance of food security for New Yorkers' wellbeing. We look forward to continuing our partnerships with the City and other organizations connecting New Yorkers with the food they need to thrive.

²⁸ Abt Associates, Inc. "Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (SEBTC) Demonstration: Summary Report." U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. May 2016. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/ops/sebtfinalreport.pdf>, accessed April 2024.



Testimony

New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

Submitted by:

Lakisha Morris

**Director of Operations, Community Outreach Services
Catholic Charities Community Services**

May 29, 2024

Good afternoon, Chair Ayala, and members of the Committee on General Welfare. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Catholic Charities Community Services on the challenges we face with food insecurity. I am Lakisha Morris, division director of operations within the Community Outreach Services Division.

The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York seeks to uphold the dignity of each person as made in the image of God by serving the basic needs of the poor, troubled, frail and oppressed of all religions. We collaborate with parishes, as well as non-Catholic and Catholic partners, to build a compassionate and just society. Through a network of administered, sponsored, and affiliated agencies, Catholic Charities delivers, coordinates, and advocates for quality human services and programs touching almost every human need.

Feeding Our Neighbors – Our reach

In the past year, through our Feeding Our Neighbors program, Catholic Charities Community Services (CCCS) has distributed over 5 million meals to over 650,000 households. We operate 27 food programs in NYC and have enrolled over 7,700 individuals in the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).

Feeding Our Neighbors – A growing problem

While the skyrocketing increase in food insecurity caused by the COVID-19 has partially subsided, demand remains elevated from pre-pandemic levels, spurred on by persistently high prices that eat into the budgets of both clients and the pantries that serve them.

In addition, we are experiencing a decrease in donated foods. We currently receive fresh produce from City Harvest and Food Bank, and while we are grateful for the donations, it is not enough to fill the growing need in the communities we serve. Many of our pantries have seen an uptick in new clients over the past year. This is in part due to the recent number of asylum seekers as well as the increased cost of food items –the price of eggs, meats, dairy, and fresh produce–have become unaffordable for many. Unfortunately, as an agency, we are also limited by increased costs and cannot supply these items on a regular basis.

The expiration of enhanced SNAP benefits further exacerbates food insecurity, and while proposed changes to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) would help certain families, more immediate relief is needed to prevent a rise in hunger in New York City. The reduction in SNAP assistance combined with the increases in food prices will have many families faced with difficult decisions over whether to pay their rents or purchase food.

In addition to food inflation pricing, our families are forced to eat foods that are low or non-existent in nutritional value. This negatively impacts their quality of life, ability to function, and causes our children to suffer academically.

Feeding Our Neighbors – Our limitations

At the height of COVID we were funded at \$350k through EFSP, which allowed us to support 16 of our pantries through additional food purchases and supplement the meals provided. In FY 24 we were awarded \$225 for EFSP Phase 40, which is a substantial decrease of about 35%. For EFSP Phase 41 we are experiencing another decrease with an award of \$198k.

Catholic Charities Community Services was not renewed for HPNAP (Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program) valued at \$395k. This is a huge hit to our Feeding Our Neighbors program. We had to reduce staffing and financial support for our pantries. This also limited our ability to provide better quality food for the households we serve.

Feeding Our Neighbors has seen a 20% increase in individuals served since COVID. The decrease in donations and funding has made it extremely difficult to maintain the standard of support that we have been providing over the years.

Feeding Our Neighbors – The answer

To properly address the food insecurity issue that the city is facing, we must increase the SNAP benefits and provide additional funding for organizations to purchase more nutritious foods for the households they serve. In addition, there needs to be special care taken for our youth, homeless, elderly, and disabled. Food is a necessity not a luxury, and no family should ever have to wonder where their next meal is coming from. It is our responsibility to ensure that our neighbors are supported.

Testimony of Jennifer Smith, Food Resource Manager for Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens

to the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare Oversight –

Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City

May 29, 2024

Good afternoon, Chair Ayala and members of the Committee on General Welfare. I am Jennifer Smith, Food Resource Manager for Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens. I have overseen the operation of our 21 network pantries throughout Brooklyn and Queens since 2015. I am happy to be here today as the subject of Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City could not be more important.

Since the pandemic, many of our pantries have seen an increase in attendance of 1000% or more. Small parish pantries that fed 25-30 people each week started seeing 400-500 clients. People were out of work, seniors needed help, food prices were rising. Our network went from feeding 10,000 people a month on average to feeding over 54,000 people a month. It was overwhelming, but we changed how we distributed food, received help from many organizations and, with the strength of our amazing volunteer base, made it through the worst of the pandemic.

Things started to level off in 2021 and while we never went back to pre-pandemic numbers, things became more manageable as people went back to work. We stopped seeing 400 – 500 people at a pantry and started seeing 200 -300 people. Catholic Charities was able to help clients apply for SNAP benefits. Seniors still needed help, but working families were coming less often. We were averaging feeding 25,000 people a month.

But the price of food is rising, and funding is becoming more difficult. Since the beginning of 2023, we have been seeing a steady increase of people attending our pantries once again. As of today, we feed an average of 36,000 people a month. We are seeing many clients come back, especially working families, who need our help feeding their children. Seniors need Catholic Charities' help to stretch their fixed income, as well as many new clients who have heard from friends and family that we can help. Our pantries, especially in Sheepshead Bay, Coney Island and Canarsie, are seeing an influx of Russian and Ukrainian people, many of whom have displaced family members now living with them. We have seen an increase in the amount of young people seeking the help of Catholic Charities. College and high school students are now coming to pantries, either for themselves or to help at home.

This surge of clients and the high cost of food has forced us to change our food distribution again. We are not able to provide as much fresh produce to our clients and rely mostly on canned food. I work at a pantry every Wednesday at Our Lady of Angels at 330 73rd Street in Bay Ridge. This pantry is one that has grown by over 1000%. As I register new people, I make it a point to say, " My name is Jennifer, and if you ever have an emergency and you need food, please come talk to me.

Please support this \$20 million dollar funding program in the FY'25 City Budget.

Thank you.



**Citizens' Committee
for Children** of NEW YORK

**Testimony of Jenny Veloz, Policy and Advocacy Associate
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Submitted to the New York City Council
Oversight Hearing on Food Insecurity in New York City
May 29th, 2024**

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through research and advocacy. We document the facts, engage and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

We would like to thank Chair Ayala and all the members of the Committee on General Welfare for holding today's oversight hearing on food insecurity. To ensure New York City continues its recovery from the pandemic, we must make strong and robust investments in food and nutrition supports for all families in the city.

New York leaders must address the widespread hunger crisis that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Investments in many federal hunger prevention programs have lapsed, leaving children and families struggling to afford healthy meals and groceries. According to the State Comptroller's May 2024 report on food insecurity, from 2020-2022, 11.3% households in New York State experienced food insecurity, an increase from 10.3% during the period of 2019-2021. This same report also highlights that households with children continue to experience the highest rates of food insufficiency when compared to households without children. In 2022, 16 percent of households with children experienced food insufficiency. Although that number decreased to 15.1% in 2023, it was still higher than the 10% of households without children.¹

In New York City, there has been a 60% increase in food pantry visits since before the pandemic.² Children continue to be the most impacted by food insecurity, with 1 in 4 children being unaware of where their next meal will come from.³ Anti-hunger programs, like Community Food Connections, are a vital resource for families needing extra help in accessing healthy food options. Food insecure families rely on food pantries and kitchens when they are unable to afford groceries. Investing in food services operated by the Department of Education's Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS), allows children to have healthier breakfast and lunch options in school so that they can better focus and thrive academically.

¹ Food Insecurity Persists Post-Pandemic. New York State Comptroller May 2024: <https://www.osc.ny.gov/reports/food-insecurity-persists-post-pandemic>

² Hunger in NYC. City Harvest 2024: <https://www.cityharvest.org/hunger-in-nyc/>

³ Child Hunger Data. City Harvest 2024: <https://www.cityharvest.org/child-hunger-data/>



It is imperative that New York City continue to fund and invest in programs that are vital to the health and well-being of families and children. These food initiatives play a crucial role in ensuring families have the food and nutrition supports needed to thrive. Therefore we recommend the following investments in the CFY25 Budget to help fight food insecurity:

- **Increase funding for Community Food Connection program to \$60 million and baseline that funding.** This funding will accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program.
- **Maintain \$10 million for the NYC Benefits program** to maintain all 36 contractors for the program, protect benefits enrollment and frontline positions, increase wages, and enhance internal systems.

For many families, schools are one of the primary places where children receive consistent meals and can be educated on healthy meals and nutrition. As such, we support the following school food initiatives:

- **Invest an additional \$150 million in capital funding to continue redesigning the remaining middle and high school cafeterias.** Nearly half of middle and high school cafeterias have been completed or are funded. This modernization of middle and high school cafeterias shapes students' experience with school meals and increases lunch participation.
- **Restore \$60 million to DOE's Office of Food and Nutrition Services.** Although much of this funding has been restored, healthy school meals will continue to be in jeopardy unless full funding to support school meals operations across the five boroughs is included.

We also recognize the importance of federal emergency food assistance programs like SNAP and call on New York City to ensure that HRA has the funding to engage community-based organizations in benefits outreach and streamline benefits applications. Community-based organizations are important sources of information for anyone applying for benefits, such as SNAP and WIC. And with demand for SNAP increasing, benefits outreach continues to be an important resource to alleviate food insecurity.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this critical issue for children's health and well-being. We look forward to continuing to work with the City Council and Administration to make sure that all New York City families and children have access to the nutritional support they need and deserve to be healthy and thrive.

**Testimony of
Rachel Stephenson, Chief Transformation Officer,
and
Nick Freudenberg, Distinguished Professor,
The City University of New York**

**New York City Council Committee on General Welfare Hearing
on the
Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City**

Wednesday, May 29, 2024

OVERVIEW

As Chief Transformation Officer of The City University of New York, I have been charged with leading the implementation of [CUNY CARES](#) (Comprehensive Access to Resources for Essential Services), our new initiative to meet students' needs for food security, housing stability, health care access and mental health services. I work in partnership with Distinguished Professor Nick Freudenberg. We are pleased to testify on behalf of The City University of New York at the New York City Council's Committee on General Welfare's Oversight Hearing on Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City. Our testimony will describe the extent of hunger and food insecurity among CUNY students, some of CUNY's efforts to reduce hunger and food insecurity within our community, and our suggestions for additional New York City programs and policies that could further reduce food insecurity among CUNY students.

BACKGROUND, INCLUDING IMPORTANT DATA ABOUT CUNY STUDENTS

In Fall 2023, a survey of 3,160 CUNY students, a representative sample of matriculated students enrolled at our 25 campuses that semester, found that 32.7% of CUNY students reported low or very low food security, using the [standard United States Department of Agriculture measures](#) of food insecurity. The survey was conducted by a team of faculty investigators at the CUNY School of Public Health in partnership with CUNY's Office of Institutional Research.

In Fall 2023, the University also [launched](#) CUNY CARES, a new University-wide initiative to meet students' unmet needs for food security, housing stability, health care access, and mental health services, four essential needs that support academic success. CUNY CARES started on the 3 Bronx campuses (Bronx Community College, Hostos Community College, and Lehman College), based on the high levels of needs among students in that borough. Our survey showed that the rate of food insecurity was 42.4%, higher than the University-wide rate. Our survey also showed that more than

half of the students enrolled on our Bronx campuses faced two or more unmet needs in these four areas.

In addition, the 2023 survey found that in the past year, almost 31% of CUNY students reported that food insecurity interfered with their schoolwork by, for example, reducing their ability to focus on or attend class, complete coursework, or maintain enrollment or their Grade Point Average. While 20 CUNY campuses have food pantries and all 25 have some food assistance programs, only 45% of students knew about these on-campus food programs and fewer than 8% had used on-campus programs in the past year, a finding that has led us to increase our outreach, education, and engagement efforts this year.

Our survey also assessed the SNAP enrollment status of CUNY students in Fall 2023. A robust body of academic evidence compiled by researchers at CUNY and other universities around the country shows that SNAP enrollment protects students from food insecurity.¹²³⁴ Our survey found that 16.9% of surveyed students reported they were enrolled in SNAP in the last year, 74.9% were not enrolled, and 8.2% did not know their enrollment status, usually because another member of their household managed the SNAP benefits. In Fall 2023, when CUNY [reported](#) that 231,978 students were enrolled at the University, our survey found that an estimated 39,200 CUNY students were receiving SNAP, providing a vital support to their well-being and their academic success. In the Bronx, almost twice the proportion of students – 29.4% – reported enrollment in SNAP.

However, other survey findings indicate opportunities for CUNY and the City of New York to make further progress in protecting our students from hunger and food insecurity and the disruption to academic success it can trigger. Our SNAP research team created an algorithm to assess whether students met the requirements for SNAP eligibility, using survey data that students provided on their household composition, income, and other social factors.

As those working on SNAP enrollment know, determining whether a particular household or individual is eligible for SNAP at a specific time is a challenging task, in part because of the complex requirements for SNAP enrollment set by the USDA, the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), and the New York City Human Resources Administration. Our algorithm provides an estimate, not a precise determination, but in the views of our researchers, it provides a reliable indicator of the likelihood of eligibility. Using these calculations, our research team estimated that 11% of CUNY students are eligible for SNAP but not enrolled. In Fall 2023, they projected that 25,500 CUNY students were eligible for SNAP but not enrolled. On CUNY's Bronx campuses, almost twice the proportion, 19%, of students are eligible but not enrolled. Identifying these students and assisting them to apply for SNAP would significantly increase the resources available for food to CUNY students and their households.

IMPLICATIONS OF MORE TARGETED ENROLLMENT OF CUNY STUDENTS

CUNY CARES is currently engaged in a partnership with [Benefits Data Trust](#), a nonprofit national organization that assists institutions to maximize SNAP enrollment, to create such a system for CUNY.

In New York State, in 2023 the average monthly SNAP benefit was \$196 per person enrolled.⁵ At CUNY, our students reported in our survey a median household size of 3, which would provide an average monthly benefit of \$588 per household or about \$7,000 per year. Based on these numbers, in 2023, CUNY students enrolled in SNAP received an estimated total of \$274.4 million in support from SNAP, making this program by far the largest public benefit program supporting our students. If New York City and CUNY succeed in enrolling the 25,500 students we estimate are currently eligible for SNAP but not enrolled, New York City could bring an additional \$178.5 million in federal funding for SNAP into the household food budgets of our students. Developing a specific and practical plan to bring these already appropriated federal funds into the household food budgets of our students is a concrete way New York City government and CUNY can contribute to reducing hunger and food insecurity in New York City and improving the lifetime health, economic security and academic success of our student, their families, communities, and New York City as a whole.

A variety of evidence suggests that increasing the food security of CUNY students by assisting those eligible to enroll in SNAP could bring substantial benefits to New York City. For example, a 2019 study estimated that in New York State, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual health care costs associated with food insecurity top \$3.4 billion, or approximately \$173 per person.⁶ A California study found that increasing SNAP enrollment among college students reduces their food insecurity.⁷ Several studies show that food insecurity contributes to lower GPAs and graduation rates.^{8,9} One California study found that SNAP enrollment contributed to academic success particularly “during atypical and uncertain academic times”.¹⁰ New York City’s experience with the COVID-pandemic, rising housing unaffordability, and rising food prices have made “uncertain times” seem the norm.

THE PROMISE OF CUNY CARES

While CUNY operates a number of programs to address food insecurity including [food pantries](#) and [SNAP enrollment](#), we believe that CUNY CARES can contribute to the long term goal of ending food insecurity and hunger among our students and their families. CUNY CARES is a comprehensive, integrated student-centered program designed to connect students to the campus and community services that enable them to meet their needs for food security, housing stability, health care access, and mental health services. Currently, CUNY is in the first year of a three-year demonstration of CUNY CARES on our three Bronx campuses. As we track success in meeting the essential needs of our students and contributing to their academic success, CUNY will expand this approach to other campuses. To achieve the goals of the Bronx Demonstration Project, CUNY CARES pursues six activities. It:

1. Hires and pays students to connect their peers to campus and community services.
2. Builds the capacity, coordinates, and provides new resources for existing CUNY student services.
3. Strengthens existing and creates new partnerships with New York City's health care, mental health, food assistance, and housing agencies and programs.
4. Engages CUNY faculty in helping students to find the information and referrals they need to meet their essential needs.
5. Develops new experiences and credentials that enable students who work with CUNY CARES to obtain well-paying jobs in health care and social services after they graduate.
6. Evaluates the impact of CUNY CARES on student well-being and academic success to improve implementation and scaling to all 25 campuses.

CUNY CARES is currently supported by CUNY, the Mayor's Offices of Economic Opportunity and Public Engagement, and the Carrol and Milton Petrie Foundation. Previous support came from the Andrew Mellon Foundation and the New York City Small Business Services.

We believe that CUNY CARES can provide a platform for CUNY, the Mayor's Office, the Human Resources Administration, and others to develop an ongoing and robust system to ensure that every CUNY student eligible for SNAP — and ultimately other public benefit programs — is assisted to determine eligibility, enroll in programs for which they and their families are eligible, and maintain enrollment without disruption. CUNY would welcome opportunities to leverage the current NYC Benefits Coordinating Committee, an initiative of the Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity that we, as representatives of CUNY CARES, are currently a part of, to create and implement such a system. We stand ready to assist the City Council and others to move such a plan forward.

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- ⁹ Loofbourrow BM, Jones AM, Martínez SM, Kemp LC, George GL, Scherr RE. Understanding the role of CalFresh participation and food insecurity on academic outcomes among college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Nutrients*. 2023 Feb 10;15(4):898.
- ¹⁰ Loofbourrow BM, Jones AM, Martínez SM, Kemp LC, George GL, Scherr RE. Understanding the role of CalFresh participation and food insecurity on academic outcomes among college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Nutrients*. 2023 Feb 10;15(4):898.



NOTE: This is a template for written testimony for FY25 City Council Budget hearings based on the NY Food Policy Alliance’s full budget platform. You are welcome to submit the following in its entirety or select the priorities that align with your organization’s mission. PLEASE do add detail and context from you and your organization’s expertise - personal stories and data are meaningful! [Register here for written and/or in person testimony HERE.](#)

Testimony Submitted By:
Eman Faris, MPH | Director of Advocacy | CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute
Before the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
Oversight Hearing on Hunger and Food Insecurity in NYC

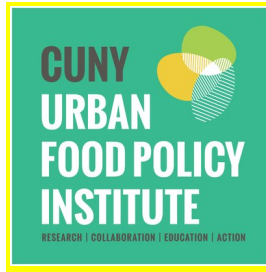
May 29, 2024

My name is Eman Faris, Director of Advocacy from the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute. We are a research and action center based in Harlem at the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health & Health Policy. Our work focuses on providing evidence to inform local policies that promote a healthy and just food system in New York City. Thank you to the Committee on General Welfare for holding today’s Oversight Hearing on Hunger and Food Insecurity in NYC and the opportunity to submit this testimony.

The CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute is part of the [NYC Food Policy Alliance](#), a multi-sector group of 60+ food system stakeholders from across New York, including frontline CBOs directly impacted by food insecurity, that work together to identify and advocate for public policies and funding that not only respond to our current economic and hunger crises, but also address the ongoing vulnerabilities and injustices of the food system. We approach this work through an anti-racism lens to ensure communities of color and other systemically under-resourced communities benefit from public policies and funding.

At a time when [50% of working age New Yorkers are struggling to cover their basic needs](#), we appreciate the Council’s focus on making food more healthy, affordable and accessible for working and middle-class families.

It is crucial to acknowledge the challenging fiscal landscape shaped by Mayor Eric Adams' proposed 15% budget cuts across New York City's agencies and those proposed in the FY25 Preliminary Budget. The proposed \$60 million cut to the Department of Education’s Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) threatens the progress made over the years to ensure healthier, more nutritious school meals. The \$3 million budget reduction for the NYC Compost initiative has led to over 100 layoffs, effectively



dismantling the city's local composting programs for residents¹. Rather than cutting critical community programs, the City should invest in and enhance essential services that are integral to the health and welfare of the city and its residents—including the thousands of new arrivals who are in need of services and support.

Our platform, advocating for enhanced economic development and support for marginalized communities, becomes more crucial in this context. As we navigate these challenging times, our commitment to advocating for equitable policies and funding in the food system is unwavering, ensuring that the most vulnerable New Yorkers are not disproportionately impacted by these fiscal adjustments.

We urge the Administration and City Council to enact a FY25 Budget that invests in access to healthy, affordable food, strengthens urban agriculture and supports the next generation of farmers, and fosters long-term resilience and economic opportunity in the City's food system. Specifically, we respectfully request your support for the inclusion of the following budget recommendations in the FY25 New York City Budget:

Strengthen Urban Agriculture & Support the Next Generation of Farmers

- **Restore \$2.6 million in funding for GreenThumb** to support the hiring of additional Community Engagement Coordinators , seasonal staff members and to increase the distribution of resources, including the delivery of compost, topsoil, and lumber, for community gardeners. Community gardens serve as vital green spaces that promote growth, unity, and environmental awareness. They also address critical challenges such as food security, environmental sustainability, and community well-being.
- **Allocate funding for the new Office of Urban Agriculture** housed within the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability (OLTPS) to maintain appropriate levels of staffing and increase transparency about Office goals and activities among the community of urban agriculture practitioners. Use funding to create a position dedicated to ongoing, intentional community engagement to inform the urban agriculture advisory's development of a set of recommendations as outlined in Local Law 123.
- **Maintain the investment of \$206.5 million in baseline funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and \$20 million for the school-year Work Learn Grow (WLG) program.** Address current barriers in DYCD regulations hindering urban agriculture worksites from providing meaningful youth experiences. The city should establish a youth focus pilot

¹ [Composting's 'True Believers' Jilted as N.Y.C. Curbside Program Grows](#)

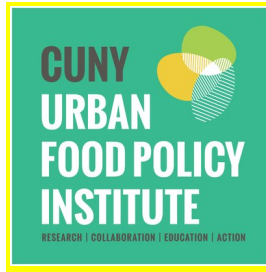


program that meets the needs of local urban agriculture organizations. This program will focus on youth leadership and development in urban agriculture.

- **Restore \$7 million in NYC Community Composting program funding**, with a focus on engaging Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in the brown bin rollout initiative. This initiative creates local jobs, reduces landfill waste, and fosters community engagement and helps move the City towards its Zero Waste goals.
- **Maintain \$10.3 million in baseline funding to support youth in urban agriculture careers**, including expanding the DOE's Career and Technical Education Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources program. Allocate substantial funding from the CTE program to support the growth of urban agriculture initiatives and create a seamless pathway from the DOE's expansion of Food and Nutrition Education for PreK-8th Grade to Career and Technical Education programs.

Foster Long-Term Resilience And Economic Opportunity In The City's Food System

- **Increase Funding to \$4.9 million for Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative**, up from \$3.7 million in FY24. We support the [NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives](#)' call for increased investment in the initiative that supports 15 worker cooperative support organizations, offering education, training, and assistance for new and existing cooperative small businesses. We urge that this increase in allocation help put worker cooperative support organizations that prioritize food businesses—such as RiseBoro Community Partnerships' [Worker Coop Development Program](#)—on the path to partnership within WCBDI. By prioritizing BIPOC and new groups focused on food systems businesses, which may not have had historic advantages and access to capital, we are promoting greater equity in our local food system and supporting the City's goals and values under the [Good Food Purchasing Program](#). Worker cooperatives stimulate a value-based workforce, fostering collaboration, shared prosperity, and a more inclusive economy. With this funding, we aim for specific outcomes, such as empowering marginalized communities, enhancing economic sustainability, and strengthening the local food ecosystem.
- **Fully Fund the Citywide Community Land Trust Initiative at \$3 million**. We prioritize the notion that moving public land with insecure tenure to trust land will strengthen land security and sovereignty and prioritize access to lands for people who have deep and historic community connections, especially BIPOC farmers, growers and community gardens. Launched in FY2020, the citywide CLT discretionary funding initiative has helped catalyze CLT organizing, education, training and technical assistance. We support the [NYC Community Land Initiative \(NYCCLI\)](#) in its call for full funding to support 20 organizations working to develop and preserve deeply-affordable housing, community and commercial spaces, and advance a just recovery in



Black and brown NYC communities. Public land must be used for public good, and be reserved for CLTs that provide for meaningful community control. It is also critical to raise awareness that CLTs can be utilized for commercial urban agriculture. We believe that this embodies the ability to balance local land control and long-term, stewarded development that addresses changing community needs. Supporting both Community-owned businesses and Community-controlled land together is part of an effort to democratize economic development in NYC's food system.

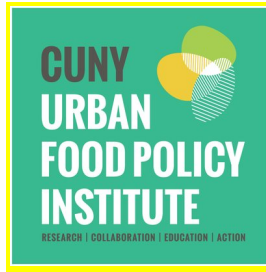
- **Create a new Food Justice Fund to allocate \$5 million towards community-led projects to grow food justice and build wealth in BIPOC and low-income communities.** In *Food Forward NYC*, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy calls for the establishment of a Food Justice Fund. We urge the City to invest in this program at \$5 Million and offer grants of at least \$500K to each grantee for both planning and implementation projects serving high need areas identified by Racial Equity Task Force. Funding would be allocated directly to community food organizations historically serving NYC residents with a demonstrated history of meeting the cultural and food needs of their communities. As this field of work requires long term investments, the fund should prioritize 2 year grant cycles and allow for flexibility on spending deadlines upon receiving grants. We also ask that the City explore a private-public partnership and leverage its convening power to secure matching investment from local philanthropic foundations. Types of projects funded under this pilot could include, but not be limited to:
 - Worker Ownership: activities may include establishing or providing technical assistance for worker cooperatives, Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) and other employee-ownership models within the food system. Providing access to capital for employee ownership models in the food systems is a key strategy to build community ownership within the local food system, especially in BIPOC communities that have historically had low rates of business establishment by residents.
 - Strengthen Food Systems and Supply Chain Infrastructure: activities may include creating or expanding community kitchen programs, affordable kitchen and processing space, improving efficiency in food distribution; technical assistance to support MWBE from participating in the City's procurement contracts; local or climate-friendly food production or procurement; food recovery and waste management; support for support community food hub models, and community-owned food retail to leverage existing and growing community-owned food, health, farming and retail infrastructures; and data/technology projects.
 - Growing Food System Career Pathways: activities may include community based culinary training and workforce development opportunities to support regional rural and urban



agriculture enterprises, especially for youth and BIPOC farmers, to create a pipeline of urban farming and food systems career opportunities.

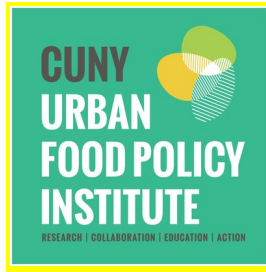
Ensure All New York City Families Have Access To Healthy, Affordable Food

- **Increase and baseline funding to a total of \$60 Million for Community Food Connection (CFC).** The Community Food Connection (CFC) program, formerly known as the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP), plays a vital role in CBOs' efforts to combat food insecurity. The program had a one-time funding increase last year, taking it from \$23.8 million to \$53.8 million, but was cut back to \$23.8 million in this year's Preliminary Budget. While the Council's response included a proposal of \$59 million to enhance the Community Food Connection, this issue was not addressed in the Executive budget. Given rising levels of inflation and increased demand at emergency food providers across the state, we call on the Administration not to cut CFC, but rather to follow City Council's lead and increase and baseline program funding for a total of \$60 million. New data from the New York Department of Health reported that nearly one in four (24.9%) New York adults experienced food insecurity within the past 12 months. Meanwhile, according to the 2023 New York City True Cost of Living Report, published by United Way of New York City, 50% of working age New Yorkers are struggling to cover their basic needs. Families struggling to make ends meet live in every NYC neighborhood but across family composition, work status, and education, the report finds that people of color are disproportionately likely to lack adequate income. Further, 80% of households below the True Cost of Living had at least one working adult and the presence of children in the household almost doubles the likelihood that a household will have inadequate income. This alarming data aligns with testimonials from food banks and food pantries across the state, the majority of whom observed a major uptick in households served last year.



A moderate increase in funding for the CFC would accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program, rising cost of produce, and continued need, including the continuing influx of asylum seekers and other migrants seeking refuge in New York City. This increase will also help to address the inefficiencies found in using third-party vendors particularly in the procurement of kosher and halal items. Kosher- and halal-observant New Yorkers make up 21% of enrollees in GetFoodNYC and so it is critical the City's food assistance programs need to have sufficient kosher and/or halal certified product available and allocate funding to agencies that can effectively store and distribute that food in a culturally competent way. In addition to increased funding, we also request that HRA work with the Administration and Comptroller's Office to speed up payments to CFC providers, ensuring they have money up front to cover the administrative costs of implementing the program and are not required to obtain reimbursement for program services. Awaiting reimbursement is especially burdensome for new and small emergency food providers that may not have a line of credit or enough cash on hand to cover up front costs of implementing the CFC program. Finally, we urge HRA to engage in an outreach and education campaign to ensure smaller, community-based providers, especially those who have begun operating since the onset of the pandemic, are able to participate in the program, and adequately supported so that they are able to continue serving their communities.

- **Maintain the Department of Education's Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) to support school meal operations across the five boroughs.** During this administration, New York City has taken major leaps forward with unprecedented commitment on improving school nutrition programs and ending child hunger. Through creative menu development and service advancements, plant forward meals, the full expansion of Cafeteria Enhancement to all middle and high schools, and expansion of availability of halal and kosher meals, more children are eating nutritious school meals each and every day. Because of these advancements, meal participation is back up to pre-pandemic levels, even factoring in the drop in enrollment. The data backs up this progress - there was an 8% increase in meal participation in the first part of this school year. We were pleased to see the Administration restore the originally proposed \$60 million cut as it was a direct threat to that progress and impact. This includes a selection of fruits and vegetables, as well as maintaining adequate funding for school food managers and staffing. We strongly urge these funds to be maintained in the final budget. Now, more than ever, as pandemic era programs come to an end and hunger continues to rise, we must continue to take every step possible to make sure NYC's school meals program is the best in the nation and connects more children with meals. New York City must continue to lead the nation in this work by investing resources in school meal programs.



- **Renew \$2 million in Funding for Food and Nutrition Education in NYC Pilot.** We endorse the renewal of funding for Food and Nutrition education, extending it to more schools, especially those in high economic need areas. This education is crucial for the health and wellness of all NYC students, positively impacting academic performance, educational behavior, and cognitive skills.
- **Invest in a 5% COLA for Human Services Workers.** We thank the City Council and Mayor Adams for funding a 3-year Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for human service workers. This will provide immediate relief, we must do more to undo years of budgets that left behind human service workers. Government reliance on the nonprofit human services sector for a broad range of vital public services has steadily grown over at least the past three decades. During that time, total New York City employment in the core social assistance sector doubled, increasing more than two-and-a-half times as fast as total private sector employment. However, human service workers make between 20-35 percent less in median annual wages and benefits than workers in comparable positions in the public and private sector. As the sector has stretched to meet community needs, providers are met with chronic delays in payment, underfunding, and a lack of sincere collaboration to create meaningful and lasting interventions, which strips away limited resources. Therefore, we ask that the City includes a 5% COLA (\$150 million, with \$50 million already allocated from the Workforce Enhancement Initiative) in the FY25 budget and 3% COLAs for the next two years each year on the personal services line of all human services contracts is needed to ensure this vital workforce does not slip further into poverty.
- **Invest new funding to combat hunger among older adults.** Specifically, at least \$10.9 million is needed for inflation cost for raw foods, gas and other items for the NYC Aging home delivered meals program, at a per-meal reimbursement rate of at least \$15.31 per meal (above the current rate of \$12.78 per meal). This is especially urgent this year as NYC Aging has released a home delivered meals procurement that will sustain the program for the next three or more years.
- **Baseline funding for NYC Benefits, a new program that enables CBOs to conduct benefits outreach** and connect eligible New Yorkers to the billions of dollars of government benefits that are currently underutilized. This helps to ensure that New Yorkers are aware of the supports available, that accessing those supports is easy and efficient and that New Yorkers enroll and stay enrolled in these support programs. After several months of uncertainty about whether contracts and funding would continue beyond FY24, on April 17th, HRA announced to providers that their contracts would continue for an additional 3 years. This is very good news for the future of this program. However, the Executive Budget included a one-time \$4.6 million investment in new needs funding for this program in FY25, which does not appear to be



baselined. The City must ensure that the funding for the NYC Benefits program is baselined in FY25 and outyears so all providers are able to continue their essential work.

- **Increase HRA's budget baseline to ensure it can engage community based organizations (CBOs) in benefits outreach and streamline benefits applications.** Further, we recommend additional funding to facilitate a joint application system between the SNAP program (managed by NYC HRA) and the WIC program (managed by NYS DOH), aligning with Mayor Eric Adams' pledge to develop a MyCity portal for integrated applications. This system aims to simplify the application process, making it easier and more accessible for applicants to receive the benefits they need.
- **Maintain funding for and evaluate the Grocery to Go Program.** This program originally emerged in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic as food assistance for homebound New Yorkers and has since been redesigned to provide food insecure New Yorkers who also have hypertension and/or diabetes with monthly credit to purchase groceries through an online marketplace of local grocery stores. To make the program more impactful and ensure unspent credits do not go to waste we strongly recommend: 1) the monthly credits allotted to each participating household are increased to ensure that funds are reaching the individuals that the program is intended to serve, 2) expand the list for diet related conditions to widen the scale of the program, and 3) allow for the participation of young adults who meet the other eligibility criteria. Finally, we encourage the program to allow enrollees to have the freedom to use the credits on food items of their choosing that reflect need, cultural preference, dietary or medical requirements and personal taste. We strongly encourage the DOHMH not to apply additional limitations to eligible foods and to maintain that Grocery to Go credits can purchase SNAP approved items.
- **We also urge full funding for the following City Council initiatives:**
 - \$2.8 million for the Anti-Poverty Initiative
 - \$7.63 million for Council's Food Pantry initiative
 - \$2.134 million for Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education, which funds farmers markets, urban farms, community gardens, and programs to expand the use of SNAP benefits
 - \$1.5 million for the Food Access and Benefits Initiative (HRA)

Thank you for your time. To follow up, you can contact me at: eman.faris@sph.cuny.edu.

**New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
Oversight – Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City**

Testimony of EmblemHealth

May 29, 2024

My name is Nazneen Rahman, and I am an Associate Vice President at EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care, overseeing the programming and operations of all 15 of our Neighborhood Care sites across New York City. On behalf of EmblemHealth and the thousands of New Yorkers we employ and serve, I would like to thank Chair Ayala and the members of the Committee on General Welfare for holding this hearing and for providing the opportunity to speak on the pressing issue of food insecurity in our city.

Neighborhood Care is a non-profit operating in all five boroughs, where we provide free in-person and virtual support, access to community resources, and health and wellness classes to all community members. Our staff represent and reflect the communities they serve, and we tailor our programming to fit the needs of each community. We provide services in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Haitian Creole, and 81% of our team members are bi or trilingual.

At Neighborhood Care we are dedicated to addressing the unmet health and wellbeing needs facing our communities, and some of our key priorities include increasing access to healthy food and nutritional guidance. In 2023, nearly 72,000 individuals accessed care through our sites, and we reached nearly 7,500 recipients at food pantry and farmers market events, in collaboration with our partners at our Harlem, Crown Heights, East New York, and Jackson Heights locations. We also won support for three grant programs that increased food access and programming at our sites in Flushing, Chinatown, and Cambria Heights, thanks to Council Member Ung, Manhattan Borough President Levine, and State Senator Comrie. In addition to these events, we host nutrition classes such as Plant-Based Eating 101 and Discover a Heart Healthy Diet, we run diabetes self-management courses, and we facilitate SNAP enrollment.

We support the City Council's efforts to address hunger and food insecurity in New York City, and we hope to be a constructive partner and resource to the City Council to accomplish these goals. We would welcome support and partnership from Council Members to enhance our ability to host food distributions and culturally competent nutritional education at our Neighborhood Care sites. We would also be happy to share our findings and experiences working directly with the community and would like to be considered as a partner in initiatives you have underway to improve access to healthy food.

We know firsthand how access to fresh food and nutritional education has a significant impact on overall health and wellness, and we look forward to continuing to work together to ensure that everyone in our communities has access to equitable, holistic care and resources.



**Testimony Submitted by
Iyeshima Harris-Ouedraogo, Policy Manager, Equity Advocates
For the Committee on General Welfare
Oversight Hearing : Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City**

May 29 , 2024

My name is Iyeshima Harris-Ouedraogo, Policy Manager, Equity Advocates. Thank you to Council Member Ayala for holding today's budget hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Equity Advocates builds the capacity of nonprofit organizations to address the underlying causes of food inequity through policy and systems change. We partner with New York-based organizations working to alleviate hunger and poverty, providing them with the tools they need to be more civically engaged—including policy education, advocacy training and coalition leadership, such as convening the NY Food Policy Alliance since March 2020.

[NYC Food Policy Alliance](#) is a multi-sector group of 75+ food system stakeholders from across New York, including frontline CBOs directly impacted by food insecurity. The Alliance's mission is to identify and advocate for public policies and funding that not only respond to our current economic and hunger crises, but also address the ongoing vulnerabilities and injustices of the food system. Collectively, we approach this work through an anti-racism lens to ensure communities of color and other systemically under-resourced communities benefit from public policies and funding.

It is crucial to acknowledge the challenging fiscal landscape shaped by Mayor Eric Adams' proposed 15% budget cuts across New York City's agencies and those proposed in the FY25 Preliminary Budget. The proposed \$60 million cut to the Department of Education's Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) threatens the progress made over the years to ensure healthier, more nutritious school meals. The \$3 million budget reduction for the NYC Compost initiative has led to over 100 layoffs, effectively dismantling the city's local composting programs for residents¹. Rather than cutting critical community programs, the City should invest in and enhance essential services that are integral to the health and welfare of the city and its residents—including the thousands of new arrivals who are in need of services and support.

Our platform, advocating for enhanced economic development and support for marginalized communities, becomes more crucial in this context. As we navigate these challenging times, our commitment to advocating for equitable policies and funding in the food system is unwavering, ensuring that the most vulnerable New Yorkers are not disproportionately impacted by these fiscal adjustments.

¹ [Composting's 'True Believers' Jilted as N.Y.C. Curbside Program Grows](#)

Amidst these challenging budgetary constraints, our platform is more committed than ever to fostering equitable economic development and ensuring that vulnerable communities, already disproportionately affected by economic disparities, do not face further marginalization. We seek a FY25 City Budget that will ensure all New York City families have access to healthy, affordable food, strengthen urban agriculture and support the next generation of farmers, and foster long-term resilience and economic opportunity in the City's food system.

We respectfully request your support for the inclusion of the following budget recommendations in the FY25 New York City Budget:

Ensure All New York City Families Have Access To Healthy, Affordable Food

- **Increase and baseline funding to a total of \$60 Million for the Community Food Connection (CFC), formerly known as the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP).** We are concerned about the apparent reappropriation of funds from last year's budget to this incredibly impactful program that addresses the ongoing hunger crises. Given rising levels of inflation and increased demand at emergency food providers across the state, we call on the Administration not to cut CFC, but rather to increase and baseline program funding for a total of \$60 million. New data from the New York Department of Health reported that nearly one in four (24.9%) New York adults experienced food insecurity within the past 12 months. Meanwhile, according to the 2023 New York City True Cost of Living Report, published by United Way of New York City, 50% of working age New Yorkers are struggling to cover their basic needs. Families struggling to make ends meet live in every NYC neighborhood but across family composition, work status, and education, the report finds that people of color are disproportionately likely to lack adequate income. Further, 80% of households below the True Cost of Living had at least one working adult and the presence of children in the household almost doubles the likelihood that a household will have inadequate income. This alarming data aligns with testimonials from food banks and food pantries across the state, the majority of whom observed a major uptick in households served last year.

A moderate increase in funding for the CFC would accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program, rising cost of produce, and continued need, including the continuing influx of asylum seekers and other migrants seeking refuge in New York City. This increase will also help to address the inefficiencies found in using third-party vendors particularly in the procurement of kosher and halal items. Kosher- and halal-observant New Yorkers make up 21% of enrollees in GetFoodNYC and so it is critical the City's food assistance programs need to have sufficient kosher and/or halal certified product available and allocate funding to agencies that can effectively store and distribute that food in a culturally competent way. In addition to increased funding, we also request that HRA work with the Administration and Comptroller's Office to speed up payments to CFC providers, ensuring they have money up front to cover the administrative costs of implementing the program and are not required to obtain reimbursement for program services. Awaiting reimbursement is especially burdensome for new and small emergency food providers that may not have a line of credit or enough cash on hand to cover up front costs of implementing the CFC program. Finally, we urge HRA to engage in an outreach and education campaign to ensure smaller, community-based providers, especially those who have begun operating since the onset of the pandemic, are able to participate in the program, and adequately supported so that they are able to continue serving their communities.

- **Maintain the Department of Education's Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) to support school meal operations across the five boroughs.** During this administration, New York City has taken major leaps forward with unprecedented commitment on improving school nutrition programs and ending child hunger. Through creative menu development and service advancements, plant forward meals, the full expansion of Cafeteria Enhancement to all middle and high schools, and expansion of availability of halal and kosher meals, more children are eating nutritious school meals each and every day. Because of these advancements, meal participation is back up to pre-pandemic levels, even factoring in the drop in enrollment. The data backs up this progress - there was an 8% increase in meal participation in the first part of this school year. We were pleased to see the Administration restore the originally proposed \$60 million cut as it was a direct threat to that progress and impact. We strongly urge these funds to be maintained in the final budget. Now, more than ever, as pandemic era programs come to an end and hunger continues to rise, we must continue to take every step possible to make sure NYC's school meals program is the best in the nation and connects more children with meals. New York City must continue to lead the nation in this work by investing resources in school meal programs.

- **Invest in a 5% COLA for Human Services Workers.** Government reliance on the nonprofit human services sector for a broad range of vital public services has steadily grown over at least the past three decades. During that time, total New York City employment in the core social assistance sector doubled, increasing more than two-and-a-half times as fast as total private sector employment. However, human service workers make between 20-35 percent less in median annual wages and benefits than workers in comparable positions in the public and private sector. As the sector has stretched to meet community needs, providers are met with chronic delays in payment, underfunding, and a lack of sincere collaboration to create meaningful and lasting interventions, which strips away limited resources. Therefore, we ask that the City includes a 5% COLA (\$150 million, with \$50 million already allocated from the Workforce Enhancement Initiative) in the FY25 budget and 3% COLAs for the next two years each year on the personal services line of all human services contracts is needed to ensure this vital workforce does not slip further into poverty.
- **Invest new funding to combat hunger among older adults.** Specifically, at least \$10.9 million is needed for inflation cost for raw foods, gas and other items for the NYC Aging home delivered meals program, at a per-meal reimbursement rate of at least \$15.31 per meal (above the current rate of \$12.78 per meal). This is especially urgent this year as NYC Aging has released a home delivered meals procurement that will sustain the program for the next three or more years.
- **Maintain funding for NYC Benefits, a new program that enables CBOs to conduct benefits outreach** and connect eligible New Yorkers to the billions of dollars of government benefits that are currently underutilized. This helps to ensure that New Yorkers are aware of the supports available, that accessing those supports is easy and efficient and that New Yorkers enroll and stay enrolled in these support programs. As a result of the OTPS freeze, the funding for this program has only been released through June 30th, 2024. The original RFP was intended to run for three years and we are only in the second half of the first year. The program must continue so that CBOs can continue to do this work.
- **Increase HRA's budget baseline to ensure it can engage community based organizations (CBOs) in benefits outreach and streamline benefits applications.** Further, we recommend additional funding to facilitate a joint application system between the SNAP program (managed by NYC HRA) and the WIC program (managed by NYS DOH), aligning with Mayor Eric Adams' pledge to develop a MyCity portal for integrated applications. This system aims to simplify the application process, making it easier and more accessible for applicants to receive the benefits they need.
- **Maintain funding for and evaluate the Grocery to Go Program.** This program originally emerged in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic as food assistance for homebound New Yorkers and has since been redesigned to provide food insecure New Yorkers who also have hypertension and/or diabetes with monthly credit to purchase groceries through an online marketplace of local grocery stores. To make the program more impactful and ensure unspent credits do not go to waste we strongly recommend: 1) the monthly credits allotted to each participating household

are increased to ensure that funds are reaching the individuals that the program is intended to serve, 2) expand the list for diet related conditions to widen the scale of the program, and 3) allow for the participation of young adults who meet the other eligibility criteria. Finally, we encourage the program to allow enrollees to have the freedom to use the credits on food items of their choosing that reflect need, cultural preference, dietary or medical requirements and personal taste. We strongly encourage the DOHMH not to apply additional limitations to eligible foods and to maintain that Grocery to Go credits can purchase SNAP approved items.

Also, we would like to commend and uplift the Council's Farm Bill resolutions. Over the past year, we have partnered with NYS nonprofit organizations, Food for the Spirit and Black Farmers United, to launch a statewide Farm Bill campaign and policy platform that uplift the voice of over 300 New York State residents. Our campaign prioritized outreach to and participation of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) farmers, producers, nonprofit practitioners, those with direct experience with Farm Bill programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Child Tax Credit, EATS Act of 2023 and life-saving food aid.

Progress towards a just food system requires us to acknowledge and address the historic and ongoing structural racism embedded in our food system and to actively promote food sovereignty and racial equity. We advocate for ensuring equity in all Farm Bill policies as a way to offset discrimination in communities that have historically been marginalized. There our platform uplifts the need for the 2023 Farm Bill:

- **Include language from [HR6338- The SNAP Plus Act of 2021](#) to remove the restrictions on purchasing hot prepared foods** through SNAP and expand participants' choices.
- **Expand access to SNAP by removing barriers for eligibility**, including for new asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented immigrants and DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipients, and individuals with prior felonies. Remove the current time limits on benefit eligibility for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs), and permanently expand SNAP eligibility to students by eliminating long-standing work-for-food SNAP rules that require many students to work at least 20 hours per week or participate in federal work-study programs.
- **Increase funding for TEFAP by indexing the program to the Low-Cost Food Plan.** Currently, the annual TEFAP appropriation is calculated based on changes to the Thrifty Food Plan. However, the Low-Cost Food Plan is more closely aligned with the amount that low- and moderate-income families report needing to spend on food.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Food Bank For New York City testimony
for the
New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
on the
Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City oversight hearing
May 29, 2024

My name is Nicholas Buess, and I am Director of Government Relations at Food Bank For New York City (Food Bank). Thank you, Chair Ayala, Deputy Speaker Farias, committee members and staff for all the work you do to fight food insecurity and poverty. And thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this important topic.

FOOD BANK FOR NEW YORK CITY

Since 1983, Food Bank For New York City has distributed nearly 1.5 billion meals, including 60 million meals last year to over 800 member and community organizations throughout the five boroughs. Through our core work distributing food, our financial empowerment programs, and our education and advocacy efforts, Food Bank empowers New Yorkers to achieve food security for good.

Food Bank's financial empowerment work connects people to federal resources such as SNAP benefits and **tax credits and refunds through free income tax preparation, which put \$77 million back into the pockets** of low-income New Yorkers last year alone and stimulated the economies of our communities.

Our SNAP teams works to expand the ability of community-based organizations to connect New Yorkers to SNAP through training on outreach, eligibility screening, and application assistance, and convenes **New York City's SNAP Taskforce**. The Taskforce brings together community-based SNAP advocates and NYC's Department of Social Services/Human Resources Administration (DSS/HRA) to share policy updates, provide ongoing technical assistance, and implement our innovative **SNAP Mediation Model**.

Food Bank's nutrition education programming, partially funded through the SNAP-Ed Farm Bill program, reaches New Yorkers of all ages – including over 50 DOE schools through our **CookShop** program and 50 community-based organizations through our **Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables** program, which incentivizes healthy eating by allowing SNAP recipients to increase their buying power.

As a member of the NYC Food Policy Alliance, Feeding NYS and Feeding America, Food Bank partners with advocates, colleagues and impacted communities to advance city, state and federal policy that protects people from hunger. This includes our advocacy campaign and coalition work around the Farm Bill and highlighting the bill's importance to New Yorkers in need and the food assistance network.

STATE OF HUNGER IN NEW YORK CITY

Food pantries, soup kitchens and community-based organizations are on the frontline of ensuring food security for our most vulnerable neighbors. Our network of community partners is being asked to do more with less, as the high cost of food and sunsetting of pandemic resources strain household budgets, the food assistance network is rising to meet the increased need for food and other necessities, including among migrants and asylum seekers. While our network of food assistance providers serve people without questioning immigration status, many partners report serving an increased number of migrants and asylum seekers.

At the same time, federal pandemic-era increases in food benefits and food supply at food pantries and soup kitchens has expired. Despite the proven ability to reduce poverty rates, especially among children, resources such as enhanced **federal earned income and child tax credits**, increases to **SNAP allotments**, and robust **food assistance support** are ending at a time when New Yorkers have been cutting back at the grocery store and increasingly turning to food assistance organizations.

According to the 2023 NYC True Cost of Living Report, 50% of NYC families do not have sufficient resources to meet their needs. As food prices and cost of living continue to outpace wages and resources, the demand experienced by the food assistance network remains significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels. **Visits to the food assistance network have increased 80% since pre-pandemic levels, with nearly 1.2 million New Yorkers experiencing food insecurity.**

IMPORTANCE OF THE FARM BILL TO NYC

The Council's introductions today underline the importance of a strong Farm Bill for New Yorkers. 1.7 million New York City residents rely on SNAP, while over a million New Yorkers who visit food pantries and soup kitchens each year rely on The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), also funded through the Farm Bill.

Food Bank is deeply concerned about some of the proposals which are coming from the House which would undermine SNAP by rolling back modernizations to that aim to more accurately reflect the cost of food. These improvements helped keep 2.3 million people out of poverty and reduced child poverty by over 8%, but proposals in the House version of the Farm Bill would eliminate and estimated \$30 billion of resources for low-income households.

On May 23, the House voted on its Farm Bill mark up, the Farm, Food and National Security Act of 2024. While the bill includes several improvements to SNAP, including removing barriers for people with former felony convictions, simplifying applications for older adults, and improving outreach to college students, any improvements are vastly outweighed by its intent to limit benefits through changes that would prevent future updates to how benefit amounts are set. SNAP benefit amounts are calculated through the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP). The TFP sets such amounts based on updated nutrition guidance, and those determinations also impact the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and Summer EBT benefits for families.

Today, the average benefit for SNAP is a modest \$5.45 per person per day – which is less than the cost of buying food in a Manhattan grocery store for a single meal. This huge gap in resources and food cost means that that low-income families who rely on SNAP also often rely on our City's food pantries and soup kitchen.

TEFAP is the food assistance network's largest source of cost free food in New York City. This program provides about half of the food that Food Bank distributes annually. Unfortunately, our overall distribution has diminished since the height of the pandemic, and proposed changed to the TFP would even further limit TEFAP's ability to meet the need in New York City.

We will continue to call on our New York City Congressional delegation to stand strong against attacks to anti-hunger programs, and to say that no bill is better than compromising on a bad bill.

INVESTMENTS IN FOOD ASSISTANCE CAPACITY & INNOVATION

It's critical that all levels of government increase investments in our food assistance network. In New York City that means funding the **Community Food Connection** program and fortifying the Council's **Food Pantries Initiative**. Just last week, Food Bank was joined by food assistance providers from across the city as we rallied on

the steps of City Hall to reject cuts to this critical service. **We thank and stand with the Council to call for baseline funding for \$60M for our City's Community Food Connection.**

The FY25 budget must invest resources to help mitigate the coming rise in food insecurity in New York City and provide support to the CBOs on the ground at the frontlines of the fight against hunger. The work of Food Bank and our member organizations would not be possible without support from City government funding from the Council and agencies. As the Council and the Administration negotiate the next budget, we urge our Council Members to continue to advocate to protect and enhance funding for direct food assistance, benefits outreach and access, and city-wide food initiatives.

Food Assistance at Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens - Community Food Connection

The Community Food Connection (CFC), formerly known as the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP), provides an array of essential food items to emergency food providers across the City, including food pantries and soup kitchens. For many years, the Council called on HRA to expand the food items offered by the program. In Fiscal 2023, HRA revamped the program with a new contracted vendor providing a wider variety of food options, including fresh fruits and vegetables. That same fiscal year, the Council negotiated with the Administration for a \$30 million increase to the program's baseline budget. Yet, the increased funding was not baselined and only included in Fiscals 2023 and 2024. In the Preliminary Plan, the Fiscal 2024 budget for CFC is \$57 million, dropping to \$25 million in Fiscal 2025, and further declining to \$21 million in Fiscal 2026 and in the outyears. Food insecurity has only been increasing and the Council calls on the Administration to provide an additional \$35 million in Fiscal 2025 and \$39 million in Fiscal 2026 and in the outyears to restore and enhance CFC funding. The additional funding will allow the program to continue providing expanded and healthier food options, better addressing the rise in food insecurity.

City Council Food Initiatives

We thank the New York City Council for their ongoing support of key food security initiatives including **Food Pantries** (FY24 total \$7.26 million) and **Food Access & Benefits** (FY24 total \$1.5 million). The Food Pantries initiative provides grants to food pantries and soup kitchens, supporting hundreds of organizations in every corner of our City. The Food Access & Benefits initiative includes funding to Food Bank for income support services including SNAP outreach and assistance, direct service referral network, and our free income tax assistance program – work that in FY23 alone put \$77 million back into the pockets of New Yorkers, providing essential resources for household food budgets. Food Bank is proud to partner with the Council on these initiatives and **supports enhanced funding in FY25 to ensure that these services help more New Yorkers achieve food security.**

Connecting New Yorkers to Benefits and Assistance – NYC Benefits and MyCity Portal

New York continues to lead the nation in ensuring our neighbors who are eligible for SNAP are enrolled, yet still 1 in 4 New York City residents who qualify are not participating. **We believe that the way to close that gap is to continue to invest in community-based SNAP outreach and assistance.** We applaud HRA/DSS for their commitment to continue to fund **NYC Benefits** and thank the City Council for ongoing support for the **Food Access and Benefits Initiative**. These programs allow us to meet people in trusted, community-based spaces and provide highly personalized support. **We urge the Council to expand CBO support for SNAP assistance.**

We applaud the Administration for announcing continued funding of **\$10 million** for *NYC Benefits* program in FY25 to ensure current providers can continue this vital work of benefits outreach and assistance. Food Bank

supports the efforts of administration in improving the administration of critical food benefits, and applauds the efforts of HRA/DSS for clearing the backlog of SNAP applications. More can and must be done to streamline benefits access to ensure New Yorkers can quickly and easily access critical benefits to which they are entitled. To that end, we support the Mayor's inclusion **\$8M for the implementation of a comprehensive MyCity portal** in FY25.

CONCLUSION

While we see some promising investments in the Mayor's executive budget, we must remain vigilant and stand with our network of direct service organizations who have the expertise and community connection to protect our neighbors from hunger. We are eager to collaborate with the Council to ensure that New Yorkers have access to the resources they need not only to survive but also to thrive. Thank you for your time and for giving us the opportunity to testify today.



**God's Love We Deliver
Testimony to the Committee on General Welfare
May 29, 2024**

Thank you, Chair Ayala and all members of the Committee on General Welfare. My name is Camila Gomez, and I am here on behalf of God's Love We Deliver, New York City's leading provider of medically tailored, home-delivered meals and nutritional counseling for people living with severe or chronic illness and who are too sick to shop or cook for themselves and their families. Annually, we prepare and cook more than 4 million meals in our kitchen with fresh ingredients, and deliver in refrigerated vans directly to the homes of more than 15,000 clients.

The medically tailored meal (MTM) model is an intervention designed to support people living with severe and chronic illnesses. Our meal plans are tailored to the medical and dietary needs of each client by one of our 11 Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDN). As part of the MTM intervention, along with the provision of medically tailored meals, our clients receive unlimited nutritional counseling sessions from our team of RDNs in an effort to provide ongoing support to clients.

Research demonstrates that **MTMs improve health outcomes, lower cost of care, and increase patient quality of life.** In fact, when patients receive MTMs, healthcare systems see a 16% net cost savings (after paying for the intervention), patients are admitted to the hospital 50% less often, and they reduce their reliance on emergency department services by 70%. Further, clients who receive MTMs report improved adherence to medication, show improved lab results, and report improved quality of life.

We believe that being sick and hungry is a crisis that demands an urgent response, and for New Yorkers living with complex illnesses, God's Love is the only service that stands between them, hunger, and malnutrition. Each year, God's Love continues to grow to meet the demand for services. It is one of our core principles to that we will never have a waiting list. **This becomes increasingly difficult without additional support as we are now on track to deliver 4.3 million meals this fiscal year, having grown 50% in just the last two years.**

Now in our 39th year of service, we have been a longstanding life-saving resource for New Yorkers who are living with serious illnesses and are facing malnutrition. Food insecurity



impacts an individual's ability to follow medication plans, control chronic conditions, and receive timely medical care. **Furthermore, malnourishment increases a person's likelihood to be readmitted to the hospital after a first hospitalization by 50%.** During the coronavirus pandemic, we saw a widespread increase in food insecurity and its impact on our community's health. As a designated essential service provider during the pandemic, we are proud to say that we did not miss a day of service throughout the pandemic.

Every year we see an increase in demand for our services across the five boroughs. In our commitment to health equity, we target outreach to the most underserved communities with greater health disparities to remove barriers to equitable access to care. **In light of the great need demonstrated by New Yorkers living with severe and chronic illness, along with the improved health outcomes and cost savings demonstrated by research, we ask that the City Council develops a contract specifically in service of those in need of life-saving medically tailored meals; appreciating that this may not happen in the last month of the fiscal year, we urge the Council to support our request for FY25 Discretionary Funding through the Speaker's Office.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Camila Gomez

God's Love We Deliver



**Presented before the
New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare
Oversight - Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City
May 29, 2024**

Thank you, Chair Diana Ayala and members of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to testify at today's oversight hearing on Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City. I am Cara Jiang, a Registered Dietitian and Director of Food & Nutrition at Housing Solutions of New York (HSNY).

The Housing Solutions of New York, formerly the Bronx Parent Housing Network, is committed to ending homelessness in New York City. We accomplish our mission by delivering essential support services, as well as creating holistic paths to employment and stability so that individuals and families experiencing homelessness can secure and retain safe, clean, affordable, and permanent housing.

HSNY understands that to successfully address the homelessness crisis, we must also focus our efforts on helping New Yorkers who are facing poverty and may become at risk of homelessness. It is for this reason that we are intentional in running programs and services, like the Food & Nutrition Services Program, to address root causes, provide community stability, and prevent homelessness before it occurs.

We would like to thank Speaker Adrienne Adams and the members of the City Council for their support of HSNY and its variety of programs. Our partnership has impacted the lives of thousands of New Yorkers, providing critical services and programs for individuals and families including providing transitional housing, pathways to permanent housing, social support services, food and nutrition services and more.

Food Insecurity in New York City

Food insecurity is associated with [negative outcomes](#), such as poor physical health, low educational achievement among children, and poor mental health, that perpetuate the [cycle of poverty](#). According to the [2022 Food Metrics Report](#) by the NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy, 14.6% of NYC residents, representing more than 1.2 million people, experienced food insecurity. While slightly improved since 2020, food insecurity rates continue to be higher than pre-pandemic levels and are exacerbated by increased food costs in recent years. With [homelessness in NYC at its highest since the Great Depression](#), it is imperative that evidence-based programming that addresses the underlying causes of poverty receives focus.

We commend [efforts](#) by the city in promoting access and awareness around nutritious foods through Executive Order 8, Executive Order 9, and programs like Community Food Connection and Groceries to Go. Programs like these are a lifeline for many New Yorkers who do not have adequate access to healthful foods. However, we also know that there is more work to be done to build a food system that



supports our city's most vulnerable in achieving stability not only in food, but also in health, housing, and beyond.

HSNY's Efforts to Address Food Insecurity

HSNY recognizes that consistent access to nutritious food is a key factor in both health and stable housing, and by empowering food security and nutrition, we promote community stability and fight against homelessness and recidivism. Since 2019, our Food & Nutrition Services program has empowered food security in our community through a variety of services:

- **Ryan White Food & Nutrition Services Program:** HSNY provides healthful groceries, nutrition and food budgeting education, referral services, and 1-on-1 motivational interviewing/nutrition counseling to low-income people living with HIV. Our pantry is supermarket-styled and allows clients to choose the foods they want to promote autonomy and cultural acceptance. In addition to providing healthful foods like fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, staples, dairy, and dairy alternatives, we also provide case management, motivational interviewing, and referrals to address the root causes of food insecurity and poverty. As of March 2024, this program has provided comprehensive food and nutrition services to over 435 people living with HIV, delivering over 1,200 comprehensive assessments, over 2,400 1-on-1 nutrition counseling sessions, and over 34,000 pantry bags.
- **Emergency Pantry Services for HSNY Family Shelters:** HSNY provides a variety of meal-kit themed pantry bags to clients experiencing food insecurity emergencies while in shelter. Bags contain educational resources and nutritious foods for use towards healthful balanced meals. In addition to addressing emergencies, we also connect clients to services that will promote food security and stabilization. Since starting these services in May 2023, we have provided over 1,700 emergency pantry bags to shelter sites.
- **Community Pantry:** We understand that addressing food insecurity is key for a stable life. Recognizing that food insecurity rates are highest in the Bronx, HSNY expanded its client-choice supermarket-styled pantry to serve general Bronx community residents in September 2023. Through our appointment-based system, we have supported the city by decreasing long, winding wait lines. This ultimately promotes dignity for our most vulnerable populations in times of need. Since starting this program in September 2023, we have provided pantry bags to over 1,200 community residents.

[Research](#) shows that a food pantry model with client-choice, nutrition education, motivational interviewing, and targeted referral services increases long-term food security. This evidence-based model addresses underlying reasons behind food insecurity, boosts self-efficacy, and partners with other community agencies to improve economic well-being. Further [research](#) also shows the feasibility and effectiveness of food pantry-based interventions in delivering a wide range of positive outcomes including improved nutrition and health literacy, cooking skills, healthy food choices, diabetes



management, and access to community resources. Combined, these key services work together in helping people overcome the cycle of poverty.

Recommendations to Provide Food Security

We are pleased that the Council is supportive of crucial federal bills that address food insecurity-- including the Farm Bill (Res. No. 0227-2024), Enhanced Access to SNAP Act of 2023 (Res. No. 0237-2024), and the Hot Foods Act of 2023 (Res. No. 0025-2024).

We call on Council Members to encourage their federal colleagues to prioritize nutritious foods as part of each legislation. A [2011 USDA study](#) estimates that over 20% of SNAP dollars are spent on foods that increase disease, namely sweetened beverages (which was the second highest category), prepared desserts, candy, and other items. Not only do these purchases not meet the definition of nutritious foods to address food insecurity, but they also contribute to unfair and debilitating disease rates in our most vulnerable populations. As the largest benefit for addressing food insecurity, SNAP presents an enormous opportunity to increase provisions around healthful foods by prioritizing nutritious foods as allowable purchases. This will ensure that SNAP dollars can go significantly further in helping vulnerable families achieve food security and health.

We also recommend that NYC encourages a partnership with meal providers to deliver low-cost nutritious and balanced meals to SNAP recipients, especially those who are experiencing homelessness. As a dietitian who helps individuals experiencing homelessness decide how best to spend their SNAP dollars, I know that many of them want access to hot, healthy meals-- and I also know that the price of hot meals is discouraging. At a monthly SNAP allowance of \$291, this would translate to enough meals for less than 7 days, leaving SNAP recipients in hunger for the remainder of the month.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that one of the most crucial ways to decrease food insecurity is by aligning policies and programs to evidence-based models and recommendations. To address hunger and food insecurity, we must focus on the delivery of comprehensive pantry programming and provision of nutritious food. Even though food insecurity is associated with countless negative outcomes, we can empower New Yorkers to achieve long-term food security and stability with the right support.

Food insecurity is complex. It is inextricably intertwined with many socio-economic factors. For many New Yorkers who are facing poverty, unstable housing, and food insecurity, community pantries are a lifeline. It is within these supportive environments where people go to seek and receive help to overcome their challenges. But, giving food away is not enough. By offering evidence-based comprehensive programming that combines client-choice pantry models, nutrition education, motivational interviewing, and targeted referral services, we can better help people obtain stability in food, health, housing, and beyond.

Thank you again for your partnership and the opportunity to testify today. Please contact Cara Jiang at c.jiang@hsofny.org with any questions regarding this testimony.



2024 Hearing of the NYC Council Committee on General Welfare on Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City.

May 29, 2024

Testimony of Joel Berg, CEO of Hunger Free America

I am honored to submit this testimony today on behalf of the estimated 1.28 million city residents who now struggle against hunger.

Our message is simple: New Yorkers still face massive hunger and food insecurity crises citywide, and we need a massive response from the City, especially one that focuses on increasing participation in the federally-SNAP, WIC, school breakfasts, and new summer EBT programs.

According to our analysis of USDA data, one out of every five children in New York City experiences food insecurity, while more than one quarter of children in the Bronx are food insecure. Food insecurity among employed adults increased in nearly every borough, compared to three years ago.

The most impactful and cost-effective way for the City to fight hunger is to increase participation in the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called the Food Stamps Program). Doing so would dwarf any other effort. If current caseloads and benefits levels stay stable, federal SNAP spending in New York City over the next year would be \$4.9 billion, which dwarfs City and private spending on charitable food. If the City did more to work with nonprofit groups on SNAP outreach and access and were able to raise the SNAP caseload and SNAP spending by merely five percent, that would equal \$245 million in extra federal spending on food relief.

It is important to note that not only is every penny of SNAP benefits paid for by the federal government, but any City money also spent on approved SNAP outreach and enrollment activities – including money sub-granted to nonprofit groups for such purposes – is matched 100 percent by the federal government, though the State. For all those reasons, the most cost-

effective way for the City to reduce hunger – by far – is to fund efforts to increase enrollment in SNAP and other federally-funded nutrition benefits. **Every City dollar that Hunger Free America spends on SNAP outreach work generates at least \$60 in federal benefits that fill the grocery carts of struggling new Yorkers. That is why the City should include funding for the NYUC Benefits and other similar initiatives to increase benefits access.**

The Council should also reject the proposal of Mayor Adams to slash funding for the Community Food Connection program.

Background on The Current State of Hunger In New York City

According to raw USDA data analyzed by Hunger Free America:

Across New York City, 15.8% of the population, or 1.3 million people, lived in food insecure households between 2020 and 2022. Staten Island is New York City's hungriest borough in terms of prevalence, with 21.9% of residents (123,330 people) living in food insecure households. Brooklyn contains the highest number of individuals living in food insecure households, reaching 396,188 people between 2020 and 2022.

One out of every five children (21.3%) in New York City experiences food insecurity, while more than one quarter (26.6%) of children in the Bronx are food insecure. Food insecurity among employed adults increased in nearly every borough, when comparing 2020-22 to 2017-19 levels. The number of food insecure older New York City residents increased to 204,673 between 2020 and 2022.

At the same time, hundreds of thousands of City residents eligible for federally funded benefits do not receive them. The best under-participation estimates that we have for SNAP that are official are old (for 2018, pre-pandemic). For technical reasons we would be glad to discuss, we believe USDA's estimates, even in 2018, undercounted those who are eligible but did not then receive SNAP. But even if USDA's numbers were correct, that still meant that 1 in 10 people overall, 25 percent of working people, and 30 percent of older New York State residents who were eligible for SNAP did not get it. The percentages are likely even higher for the City than the State as a whole.

As for federally funded WIC benefits (for pregnant women and children under five), as of 2021, USDA estimated that whopping 45 percent of the pregnant women and children under five eligible for WIC statewide did not get it. Unlike SNAP, WIC has no immigration restrictions in the program and has slightly higher income eligibility than SNAP, so this under-participation in WIC is especially harmful. The percentages are likely even higher for the City than the State.

As for steps the City can take to fight hunger, we have seven recommendations:

- Increase funding to nonprofit groups (including Hunger Free America) that increase access to government food benefits through the NYC Benefits program and direct City Council funding.

- Accelerate the City’s promised work to create a MyCity portal to allow application for multiple benefits.
- Urge the State to end the sub-minimum wage for tipped food service workers.
- Enact and fund a SNAP-like program, to be funded by the City, to give extra grocery funds to immigrants and working poor New Yorkers who are ineligible for federal SNAP benefits. California recently started such a program.
- Ensure that all classes in all New York City public schools provide either in classroom school breakfasts or grab and go breakfast in their hallways. Currently, New York City has the lowest school breakfast participation rate out of any big city school system in the United States, with 55.4 percent of kids who get school lunches failing to get school breakfasts.
- Work with nonprofit groups to launch a comprehensive outreach and enrollment campaign to ensure robust participation in the new Summer EBT program.
- Pass the following resolutions which express support for important federal legislation:

Res 0025-2024, calling on Congress to pass, and the President to sign S.2258/H.R.3519, the “Hot Foods Act of 2023,” to permit Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits to be used to purchase additional types of food items, particularly hot foods.

Res 0050-2024, calling upon the United States Congress to pass and the President to sign H.R. 3899, the American Family Act, which would expand the Child Tax Credit.

Res 0227-2024, calling on Congress to pass, and the President to sign, a renewed Farm Bill that increases funding for life-saving food aid.

Res 0237-2024, calling on Congress to pass, and the President to sign, S.1488/H.R.3183, the “Enhance Access to SNAP Act of 2023” (EATS Act of 2023), to remove certain eligibility disqualifications that restrict otherwise eligible students from participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

We also suggest that Council formally endorse the Congressional and State HOPE bills which would make it easier for people to apply for multiple benefits online and enable low-income families to develop assets by be able to buy a first home, start s small business, or save to pay for higher education or retirement.

We hope you can take all or some of these actions rapidly. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



LENOX HILL NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

**Testimony at the NYC Council Committee on General Welfare Hearing
Wednesday, May 29, 2024**

Council Member Ayala and Members of the Committee on General Welfare, my name is Evelyn Garcia, and I am the Executive Chef of The Teaching Kitchen at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House. Thank you for holding this important hearing. Lenox Hill Neighborhood House is a 130-year-old settlement house that provides an extensive array of social services that improve the lives of over 15,000 New Yorkers in need each year, ages 3 to 103.

Today, I will be speaking on behalf of my colleagues, our clients and community served by Lenox Hill Neighborhood House and from my unique perspective as a Chef leading a farm-to-institution training program that impacts the city in almost every council district and impacting over 17 million government-funded meals to date.

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House is in support of the following three resolutions and have cited direct impact on communities, primarily communities of color, those with low socioeconomic status and the aging population in the city, from our direct work below.

- 1) Res 0025-2024 which calls on Congress, and the President to sign the “Hot Foods Act of 2023”, to permit Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to be used to purchase hot food and other similar food types.
- 2) Res 0227-2024 which calls on Congress to pass, and the President to sign, a renewed Farm Bill that increases funding for life-saving food aid.
- 3) Res 0237-2024 which calls on Congress to pass, and the President to sign the “Enhance Access to SNAP Act of 2023” or “EATS Act of 2023” to remove certain eligibility disqualifications that restrict otherwise eligible students from participating in SNAP benefits.

The Neighborhood House serves over 400,000 meals annually to our clients in-house – including the 3- and 4-year-old children in our head start early childhood program, to unhoused women residing in our mental health shelter, and to Members of our Older Adult Centers. Our Social Workers and Benefits Advocates help clients obtain SNAP benefits, provide resources for food pantries and soup kitchens, assess for and authorize home-delivered meals, share free nutrition education programming, and often navigate conversations with clients on how to maximize governmental benefits and eligibility in order to stretch budgets and improve access to food and food security. The resounding refrain and often common barrier is lack of access to healthy affordable food and not having enough funds or resources to afford food even if accessible and available to purchase. Families and older adults often have to choose between paying for an essential bill, like rent or utilities and food.

In response to the “Hot Foods Act of 2023” and SNAP Benefits being used to purchase hot food and foods ready for immediate consumption, this seems like one helpful step to provide increased flexibility and accessibility afforded to individuals and families receiving SNAP benefits. In New York City, bodegas and other markets are often the closest and most easily accessible sources of food, as

compared with a supermarket or chain, in many neighborhoods. Limiting SNAP Benefits to not include hot foods, has perpetuated the unrealistic and unfair assumption that families, including working parents, caregivers, those living with disabilities and older adults, must have the cooking tools, skills, time, and energy to take raw ingredients and foods and prepare meals at every meal. Not to mention, many regions of the city have grocery stores with subpar, overripe or not high-quality produce to choose from, which requires adequate storage and refrigeration. There are plenty of ready-to-eat and hot foods that are healthy and affordable (i.e. soups, salads, roasted vegetables, rotisserie chicken, etc.) and having SNAP benefits include these items would be key for those populations listed above and trying to put meals on the table for themselves and others they care for. Although on an institutional scale, the cooks and chefs that the Teaching Kitchen trains each year, one of the most significant barriers which translates to communities city-wide is not having the equipment, from something as simple as a sharp knife and cutting boards, adequate storage and refrigeration for fresh produce, or the knowledge of how to use and prepare certain fresh vegetables and produce and translate into culturally diverse recipes and meals.

In response to renewing the Farm Bill to increase funding for life-saving food aid, we fully support this resolution and would seek to continue and significantly increase SNAP benefits for all who are currently eligible. With inflation costs and rising costs of food and most all essential needs, individuals and families who depend on SNAP simply do not have enough in their SNAP and household budgets to adequately address their hunger and food insecurity needs, as well as get to a place of economic stability as their food budgets are stretched thin and not adequate. Any cuts or even sustained funding without increase would stress an already fragile ecosystem. City budgets for the myriad of food programs provided by government-funded meals from food pantries to soup kitchens, to Older Adult Centers (congregate meals, and home-delivered meals) for homebound older adults and childcare programs should also be increased given the increasing number of people seeking these services and trying to access food.

In response to the “EATS Act of 2023” to remove limiting eligibility criteria that currently prevents otherwise eligible students from participating in SNAP benefits, the Neighborhood House fully supports this reversal. The reality of attending higher education and having a status as a student in higher education while balancing personal demands of caretaking, parenting and limited economic resources should not be tied to eligibility for SNAP benefits. This feels like a system set up to continually keep those trying to get ahead and out of poverty chained to a scarcity mindset and preventing best outcomes for health, wellness, and learning, if the fundamental needs of nourishment and hunger are not met. As the costs of tuition, room and board, and personal circumstances and expenses only continue to grow in an increasingly expensive city, it seems the least the government can do is to not eliminate this entire group of students solely because of their higher education enrollment status.

To address food costs and inflation, the city should partner with organizations to provide government-funded meals through nonprofit organizations and schools. At the Teaching Kitchen, we offer all nonprofits free training on our farm-to-institution model to improve citywide meal programs. Incorporating this training into workforce development for cooks and chefs, along with basic equipment upgrades, such as sharp knives and cutting boards, would ensure healthier, nutritious meals across the city. Promoting local procurement and enhancing the food system across New York State to supply locally grown food at reduced costs is essential. Additionally, investing in the salaries and professional development of cooks and chefs, especially in nonprofit and institutional kitchens, will improve food security and support the retention and financial growth of low-paid workers,

primarily women of color.

In closing, food and having access to healthy, affordable, and fresh food and meals is something every New Yorker should have access to as a right. These three resolutions are steps toward improving hunger and food insecurity in New York City; however, these actions would only address pieces of the global change needed in the food system and access to the food system for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning.



MET COUNCIL

Feeding the hungry. Serving the poor.
Changing lives.

Oversight Hearing – Committee on General Welfare May 29, 2024

Chair Ayala, and fellow members of the General Welfare and Aging Committees,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this crucial oversight hearing on food insecurity in New York City. My name is Daryl Wright and I am the Food Coalition Policy Fellow at Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, one of the largest emergency food providers in the city.

For over 50 years, Met Council has been one of America's largest Jewish charities dedicated to fighting poverty. We provide services across the five boroughs through a range of services including 100% affordable housing to our award-winning family violence program to comprehensive Holocaust Survivor assistance, senior programming, crisis intervention, and the country's largest kosher (and increasingly halal) emergency food network. In total, we provide a wide array of support to over 320,000 clients a year.

Met Council fully supports all the items on today's agenda. Despite all our work, food insecurity still rages across our City and we must do all we can to alleviate it and these resos and the bill identify areas where we can do better. In addition, we must reiterate our grave concern over the Mayor's proposed cuts to the City's Community Food Connection program (or "CFC"). CFC is one of the most important hunger fighting tools we have and we implore the Council to ensure that the program is funded to at least 2024 levels. Finally, we urge the New York City Council to reprise the "food pantry initiative" to support grass roots organizations and those excluded from the traditional emergency food system, by providing \$20 million in order to relieve severe and overlooked food insecurity remaining from the pandemic in our most under-resourced communities.

Met Council plays a unique role in the emergency food system by offering exclusively kosher and halal emergency food. While our goal is to ensure communities with specific cultural needs have the food they deserve, any New Yorker in need may access our food resources regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion.

Like a food bank, we secure food either by purchasing or through government sources, and then distribute it to Jewish, Muslim and other communities facing significant barriers to food access. In addition to linguistic and cultural barriers which have kept these communities from fully participating in the established emergency food system, these communities have historically been shortchanged as so little of the distributed product was suitable for their religious dietary restrictions, despite the fact that the need in these communities is acute and documented.

A recent study conducted found that over 80% of Muslim Americans observe a halal diet and that food insufficiency within these communities was more than double the rate of all other respondents. New York is also home to the largest Jewish population in the country. Another recent study conducted by UJA-Federation of New York showed that there are nearly 243,000 people in kosher observant households that are food insecure — one third of which are children.



MET COUNCIL

Feeding the hungry. Serving the poor.
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More broadly, we know that New Yorkers still desperately need an extra hand and another push to get back on their feet post-pandemic. The New York Times¹ recently reported that:

- i. the poverty rate is still higher (23%) than it was in 2021 (18%);
- ii. life expectancies in the City have still not recovered;
- iii. most working families in New York cannot afford to pay for their basic needs; and
- iv. evictions are rising while rents are increasing.

These studies reflect what Met Council and our partners and colleagues have witnessed firsthand; as many of us continue to serve more New Yorkers than at any point in the history of our organizations. In fact, Met Council served more people in 2022 than in 2020 or 2021, and more and more New Yorkers are arriving on our doorstep seeking food each day. These individuals cannot afford to pay for their most basic needs and they need our help. While the pandemic may be over for many, the lasting economic effects remain part of the daily lives of our community members.

At the start of the pandemic, we quickly recognized that without additional assistance, many smaller, more thinly resourced pantries might fail. Indeed, the pantry system itself seemed to be teetering under the weight of the need. The City Council stepped in and provided funding to the largest emergency food distributors in the city to supply these pantries with the food and capacity resources they desperately needed. Met Council, along with partners including Catholic Charities and the Hispanic Federation used the funding to distribute tens of millions of pounds of food in 18 months to New Yorkers in every zip code in the City. We also distributed millions of dollars in grants to keep frontline agencies operational and conducted distributions via mobile pantries and pop-ups in neighborhoods lacking pantries. Met Council – on its own – provided food and grants to halal pantries who were otherwise not connected to the emergency food system in New York City. The city’s targeted funding worked to keep the emergency food system afloat. Unfortunately, as we now know, poverty and food insecurity have not abated since the pandemic and these pantries once again need help.

Met Council urges the Council to come to the rescue again by rejecting cuts to CFC and by bringing back this initiative by providing \$20 million so that pantries can continue to provide the food resources New Yorkers so desperately need.

¹ Emma G. Fitzsimmons & Jeffrey C. Mays, Is New York City Back? Not for Everyone. (Mar. 5, 2023).



March 22, 2024

Testimony at the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

Thank you Chair Ayala and the Committee on General Welfare for holding this important hearing on food insecurity. My name is Egondu Onuoha, here today as a board member of the Metropolitan NYC WIC Association.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, known as WIC, offers nutrition education and counseling, healthy foods, breastfeeding counseling and support, voter registration, and referrals to community agencies to low-income prenatal, postpartum and breastfeeding women, infants and children up to five years of age. This is one of the only Federally-funded programs available to all residents, regardless of citizenship and immigration status. Our goal is to help women, infants and children live stronger, healthier lives. Our member organizations from the five boroughs, Long Island, and the Hudson Valley serve hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. The impact WIC makes plays a significant role in reducing healthcare costs as well as reducing high mortality rates especially among women of color.

According to the New York State Department of Health, only half of eligible New York families participate in WIC. Additionally, less than half of eligible children from age 1 to 4 participate. Our association knows that more outreach must be done to engage as many eligible New Yorkers as possible.

Despite the growing need for WIC, funding for WIC providers in New York State has remained stagnant for a decade, leaving our programs severely understaffed and unable to upgrade facilities or purchase basic technology and office equipment. This has resulted in WIC providers straining under caseloads that have become more challenging as asylum-seeking families seek our assistance.

The State has provided flat funding of just \$26 million a year for the entire Statewide program for the past 9 years, which has resulted in many WIC providers shutting their doors for good, including facilities at Jacobi and North Central Bronx, Kings County Hospital, Gouverneur Medical Center, East Harlem Council for Human Services, and Richmond University Medical Center. Those shuttered offices represent almost 12,000 expecting mothers or mothers with infants and children. More providers are in danger of

closing without the resources we need, cutting off families from a lifeline to nutritional education and food assistance we all care so deeply about.

While the Metropolitan NYC WIC Association remains in productive conversations with the Governor's office about avenues for additional funding, we must make the New York City Council aware that WIC providers need your ongoing support and advocacy on increasing State funding and forging new partnerships that will allow us to continue our work in many of your districts.

I hope you will consider us a resource as you seek ways to address food insecurity in New York City, and we look forward to collaborating with you on ensuring the long-term availability and stability of the WIC program in New York.

Thank you.



Testimony Submitted by
Stephen Grimaldi, Executive Director, New York Common Pantry
For the Committee of General Welfare Budget Hearing
on the FY25 NYC Budget
May 29, 2024

To Members of the Committee on General Welfare:

Thank you Deputy Speaker Ayala and Members of the City Council for this opportunity to testify about the critical issue of food insecurity in NYC.

I am Stephen Grimaldi, Executive Director of New York Common Pantry, and also a representative of the Roundtable: Allies for Food Access. The Roundtable is a dedicated and collaborating network of eight (8) emergency food providers throughout NYC.

Put simply: It should be a right to have access to healthy food. What should be a right, is now a fight.

An investment in providing food means allocating resources—financial, human, and material—toward programs aimed at ensuring people have access to nutritious and sufficient food.

It confirms our values as a city of “YES;” it shows that we care about those in our city who are suffering. And, it invests in the future – by confronting food insecurity today, we help solve its attendant problems of tomorrow – poor health outcomes, poor functioning in school, mental health issues.

Unfortunately, the current proposed budget does not create a positive blueprint for the future with its extreme cuts to CFC funding. For the past two years, we saw what a difference a well-funded CFC program made. CFC provided fresh produce and increased allocations for food purchases to help us serve the increased volumes of people needing food assistance.

Last year at NYCP alone we saw the number of guests we serve rise 32%. This year that has risen another 29% and we will likely distribute more than 11 million meals.

New York Common Pantry, the Roundtable and the entire emergency food network are on the front lines, mitigating the impact of inflation and cuts to pandemic era benefits and tax credit enhancements on the numerous communities we serve.

Stephen Grimaldi, Executive Director, New York Common Pantry
For the Committee of General Welfare Budget Hearing on the FY25 NYC Budget
May 29, 2024

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According to the True Cost of Living report:

- 3 million of our neighbors are considered income inadequate
- 50% of working age households do not have earnings to meet the minimum cost of living in New York City
- More than half of New Yorkers earn less than \$46,060 annually which is 200% of the poverty level for a family of three.

Do we want to see how much worse this could get? Do we want to see how devastating this would be for years to come?.

We urge the City Council and Mayor to not only restore CFC funding to its original levels but to increase funding to \$60 million for the current year, to acknowledge the growing need and to become partners with the emergency food providers to create a more sustainable and equitable food system in NYC.

Let's Invest in a Brighter Future.

Let's increase CFC, not cut it.

Let's say YES to Food Access.

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NEW YORK

**Testimony for the New York City Council Committees on General Welfare
Oversight - Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City**

May 29, 2024

Submitted by No Kid Hungry New York

Good morning, Chair Ayala and members of the Committee on General Welfare of the New York City Council. My name is Rachel Sabella, and I am the Director of No Kid Hungry New York. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing on food insecurity in New York City.

First, we thank the City Council for your continued commitment to protect New Yorkers from food insecurity. The City Council has long been a leader in addressing food insecurity, from fighting for increased supports for school meal operations to championing Breakfast in the Classroom and the expansion of no-cost school meals for every child, and leading the charge for increased, baselined funding for food pantries and soup kitchens to ensuring that food insecurity remained a top priority throughout the pandemic. Now more than ever, we are grateful to count you as our partner in the fight against food insecurity.

No Kid Hungry New York is a campaign of Share Our Strength, a national organization dedicated to ending hunger and poverty. Using proven, practical strategies, No Kid Hungry New York builds and supports public-private partnerships with the goal of ensuring children have access to the healthy food they need, every day.

With 1 in 5 children facing hunger in New York State - and the number rising to 1 in 4 in New York City - we are counting on your continued partnership in the fight against food insecurity. As pandemic era programs (such as the expanded Child Tax Credit and increased SNAP benefits) end and New Yorkers continue to face rising costs, we must take every step possible to connect more children and families with meals. Even when other levels of government have stepped back, New York City found the means to prioritize the fight against child hunger in our schools. New York City has a tremendous opportunity to lead the nation in this work and can do that by investing resources in school meal programs. Together we can make no kid hungry a reality.

No Kid Hungry New York believes that all children, no matter their borough or circumstance, deserve the opportunity to be nourished and safe, so they can live up to their full potential and achieve their dreams. Adequate nutrition, both at school and at home, helps lay the foundation for a child's physical and emotional development, educational attainment, and health and well-being. Years of data and research have demonstrated that federal nutrition programs are our nation's most effective defense against hunger and food insecurity and have helped lift millions of families out of poverty.

2024 NEW YORK HUNGER SURVEY FINDINGS

As New Yorkers grapple with an affordability crisis, rising food prices are adding to their cost of living according to the most recent poll commissioned by No Kid Hungry New York. 85 percent of New Yorkers reported that the cost of food was rising faster than their income. As a result, nearly 4 in 5 households said it had become harder to afford groceries over the past 12 months—the highest percentage tracked yet in their annual poll.

Those challenges are affecting how much New Yorkers buy and what foods they choose. Just under half of New Yorkers (43%) reported a sign of food insecurity due to rising prices like eating less nutritious food or not having enough to eat. Roughly half of New Yorkers said they now purchase less—or no—fresh produce and proteins like meat because of their cost, and 43% reported they had experienced signs of food insecurity because of cost. Those figures are significantly higher for parents of school-age children and households in rural areas.

The poll was in the field in mid-March of 2024 - when some of the students' favorite items were removed from the menus due to budget cuts. Not only are parents struggling to provide nutritious food at home, 28% of parents identified that the quality of food in New York City Public Schools was on the decline. We believe this was likely driven by the budget cuts implemented which reduced school meal options. Parents are already grappling with the challenge of providing nutritious meals at home, and the proposed cuts may further exacerbate the situation, potentially leaving many children without access to healthy foods.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO TACKLE HUNGER IN NEW YORK CITY

New York City can take many steps to address hunger and poverty across the five boroughs. Last year, we made recommendations related to the processing delays families were experiencing with SNAP applications. We are thankful that New York City stepped up and addressed the issue and we urge you to continue to work as quickly as possible to continue processing SNAP applications. As we continue to combat food insecurity, we believe fully implementing Breakfast After the Bell and increased outreach and enrollment for nutrition programs will further New York City's efforts in addition to other program ideas.

Summer EBT

With the school year quickly approaching an end, we know that summer months can be some of the toughest months for parents. With many children relying on schools for breakfast and lunch, that burden traditionally fell on parents resulting in greater cost to fill that gap. Thanks to the work of Congress, Governor Huck and the New York State Legislature, New York will be participating in Summer EBT this year. Summer EBT provides eligible families with \$120 per child in grocery-buying benefits during summer break, helping replace the meals kids would otherwise get at school. As highlighted in the No Kid Hungry poll, 4 in 5 households in New York have said it has become harder to afford groceries and Summer EBT will help provide some relief during those summer months. We'd like to thank the Speaker for your remarks in the State of the City about Summer EBT.

While New York State will be administering the program, it is critical that New York City take action to promote the program to eligible families. Partnering with local elected officials to share information, pushing out through every city agency and encouraging eligible families to enroll in SNAP are just some steps to make it easier for New Yorkers to benefit from this program. It's also important to note that these funds will be spent in local businesses, supporting economic development across the City too.

Support for School Meal Programs

Over the last few months, there has been confusion among students, parents, and advocates over opaque funding changes for the Mayor's Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS). These changes have caused concern around potential impacts to the school meal program in the largest school district in the nation.

During the City Council's preliminary budget hearing with the Department of Education, students, parents, and advocates had a clear message about the adverse effects of menu reductions at schools. At this time, the Administration made public an additional \$25 million of federal funds for FY24 to restore the cut items to school food menus, which appeared in the FY25 Executive Budget released in April. We were grateful the Administration and NYC Public Schools heard the message and restored the mid-year cuts, ensuring children could continue to access healthy no-cost meals.

Our concern now stems from the \$25 million in federal funds for OFNS not included in the office's FY25 budget. Not only does the program not include the \$25 million that allowed the restoration of menu cuts, but the FY25 proposed budget for OFNS drops by \$52 million overall.

In a city as diverse as this one, the OFNS team has worked diligently to expand options and provide culturally responsive meals. The turn out at the preliminary budget hearing and testimony focused on the cuts made to school meals showed the value students place on having more options. Students spoke loudly about how much they valued the diverse menu items such as bean and cheese burritos, chicken drumsticks, dumplings, guacamole and salsa, and bagel sticks especially as they were replaced by "soggy mozzarella sticks" as one student describes, and other lesser desired options. This made the return of preferred items even more important. But with the proposed \$25 million funding drop in FY25, will there be a return to soggy mozzarella sticks?

The budget reduction in FY25 could have a detrimental impact on the unionized workforce as well. Training programs, the installation of air conditioners in kitchens, and other safety supports were initially rolled back when the first cuts were made. At the height of the pandemic, it was the men and women of OFNS that fed the entire City of New York, and we must protect their safety. We encourage the NYC Public Schools to ensure these supports are restored now to at least the \$606.9 million and continue in future years.

Proposed Food Insecurity Resolutions

We are thankful that the New York City Council is standing up against food insecurity at all levels of government and we are in staunch support of resolutions 227, 25, 50-A, and 237. We stand in strong support with that language in Res 0227 stating "Funding for SNAP and other Farm Bill programs is vital and should be continued and increased; and any cuts to the life-saving food aid provided in the Farm Bill will increase food insecurity in New York City and threaten the health and lives of the City's most vulnerable residents".

As members of the New York City Council, your voices carry tremendous weight with members of Congress. With Farm Bill markups and votes already underway, it is critical for the New York City Council to ensure SNAP is strengthened and protected through the Farm Bill. No Kid Hungry New York is encouraging you to work with the NY Congressional Delegation to protect the value of SNAP benefits, maintain and increase access to SNAP and defend and expand access to SNAP-Ed.

Fully Implement Breakfast After the Bell

In 2015, New York City made a bold commitment to equity, requiring all city elementary schools to implement Breakfast in the Classroom and ensuring students in those schools could start the school day with a nutritious breakfast. New York City became a national model for child nutrition programs and paved the way for New York State, which passed legislation in 2018 requiring breakfast be part of the school day for more than 1,400 schools statewide, including over 1,000 schools in New York City. Despite these agreements, many schools chose not to participate and claimed there were operational barriers to offering grab and go breakfast or breakfast delivered to the classroom. During the pandemic, all New York City public schools have provided alternative breakfast options, and this program expansion must become permanent. Students who start the day with breakfast have higher attendance, better test scores and fewer chronic health problems.

Increase Awareness, Outreach and Enrollment for Nutrition Programs

With many New Yorkers still facing unemployment and underemployment, especially in the face of rising food prices and rent, safety net programs are more important than ever. Federal programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Medicaid and expanded tax credits exist to help families get back on their feet during challenging times. However, these programs only work when people can access them, which can be confusing and lead to lack of confidence in enrolling or utilizing programs. New York City must prioritize funding for outreach and education efforts to help families enroll in programs for which they or their children are eligible.

Summer Meals Accessibility

Summer meals historically reach far fewer eligible students than meals served during the school year, making summer the hungriest time of the year. In New York City, barriers to access often include accessibility of meal sites and lack of program awareness among families. Broad promotion of the summer meals program and available meal sites is integral to reducing summer hunger among New York City's children. Ensuring that information regarding meal sites comes from trusted messengers, such as schools, local elected officials, principals, parent advisory councils, and faith leaders, is an important way to encourage families to participate in the summer meals program. Many families also struggle with reaching meal sites, especially if meal sites are not close to home or when facing extreme weather. Expanding the number of meal sites and strategically placing them to avoid gaps in service are both essential strategies to increase summer meals participation.

Expand School Pantries and Mobile Markets

In 2016, New York City created first-in-the-nation food and hygiene pantries in New York City public schools. The school pantries provide food, cleaning supplies, menstrual products and tools to address hygiene for families in the school community. Investing in new school pantries would help families put food on the table, and pantry location could be determined based on food insecurity rates, if the school was in an area considered a food desert or did not have an emergency food provider in close proximity. Knowing how many communities across the city struggle to access fresh produce, partnering with other city agencies and nonprofit organizations to set up mobile markets could also increase access to fresh

produce and resources for families. School pantries also provide another opportunity to promote other nutrition programs to families.

Conclusion

The New York City Council has played a key role in combating hunger and food insecurity and has set an example for the rest of the nation. While New York City has made progress on this issue, there is more work to be done. As budget negotiations continue, we urge you to continue to prioritize increased funding for school meal programs. No Kid Hungry New York looks forward to working with the City Council and the entire Adams Administration to continue to address ending childhood hunger. We are grateful that we can count on you as a partner in this effort to ensure no kid hungry.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to share my testimony.



Testimony by the New York Legal Assistance Group,
Oversight – Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City,
And in Support of 0025-2024, Res. 0227-2024, Res. 0237-2024 and Res 0057-2024
Before the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
May 29, 2024

Deputy Speaker Ayala, Council Members, and staff, thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Committee on General Welfare on the topics of hunger and food insecurity in New York City, and on the importance of these resolutions encouraging the United States Congress to pass and the President to sign vital reforms to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; an expanded Child Tax Credit; and a renewed Farm Bill with increased funding for life-saving food aid. My name is Graham Horn, and I am a staff attorney in the Shelter Advocacy Initiative and the Public Assistance and SNAP Project at the New York Legal Assistance Group (“NYLAG”).

NYLAG uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers experiencing poverty or in crisis combat economic, racial, and social injustices. We address emerging and urgent needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, financial empowerment, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community partnerships. We aim to disrupt systemic racism by serving clients whose legal and financial crises are often rooted in racial inequality.

The Shelter Advocacy Initiative at NYLAG provides legal services and advocacy to low-income people residing in and trying to access homeless shelter placements in New York City. We work to ensure that every New Yorker has a safe place to sleep by offering legal advice and representation throughout each step of the shelter application process. We

also assist and advocate for clients who are already in shelter as they navigate the transfer process, seek adequate facility conditions and resources for their needs, and offer representation at administrative Fair Hearings.

This work often overlaps with our representation of clients having trouble accessing or maintaining their Public Assistance and SNAP benefits. We represent these clients at Administrative Fair Hearings and conduct advocacy with the Department of Social Services (“DSS”), Benefits Access and SNAP centers, and bring impact litigation to ensure that our clients are obtaining and maintaining an adequate level of benefits.

While our clients are resilient and strong, they often face the simultaneous and intersecting insecurities of hunger and housing instability. Based on my experiences, and those of my clients, I appreciate the opportunity to offer the following comments.

I. Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City

Community health is inextricably linked to adequate nourishment, and research overwhelmingly demonstrates that food insecurity has significant health and economic consequences.¹ In adults, the medical implications of inadequate nutrition include but are not limited to, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, depression, and fatigue.² In children, the consequences extend to low birth weights and delayed cognitive development.³ Such health concerns can then lead to higher medical costs throughout their adult lives.⁴ In contrast,

¹ <https://www.harvesters.org/Learn/How-Many-are-Hungry/The-Impact-of-Hunger>

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

children who are well fed do better in school; seniors with adequate food access need not make the choice between feeling nourished and purchasing other necessities; families that are satiated thrive. As such, a discussion of food access is not only about individuals, but also extends to a concern for our collective health and communal strength.

In a city of roughly 8 million people, over 1 million New York City residents are currently struggling to feed themselves and their families.⁵ When pandemic-era Emergency Allotments (SNAP-EA) ended in February 2023 (which brought all households up to the maximum SNAP benefit level and for those already receiving the maximum SNAP benefit, provided an increase of \$95), FeedNYC data showed a 60% jump in monthly visits to soup kitchens and food pantries across the City.⁶ 1 in 5 children in New York City are suffering from food insecurity.⁷ When the FeedNYC data is analyzed for families with children, average monthly visits to community food programs increased 67% compared to pre-pandemic numbers.⁸

These statistics do not fall equally across the City's diverse population. One of the many pernicious products of systemic racism is that families and communities of color are the hungriest.⁹ Similarly, rates of diabetes and hypertension, tethered as they are to nutritional intake, are higher for people of color, with people of color twice as likely to experience diabetes as compared to their white neighbors.¹⁰

⁵ <https://www.cityharvest.org/hunger-in-nyc/>

⁶ *Id.* See also, <https://www.hungersolutionsny.org/federal-nutrition-programs/snap/end-of-snap-ea/>

⁷ <https://www.cityharvest.org/hunger-in-nyc/>

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/foodpolicy/downloads/pdf/nycfoodbythenumbers.pdf>

¹⁰ *Id.*

a. Homeless Shelter Residents Have Insufficient Access to Food While in Shelter

1. Meals Are Too Small

Before turning to NYLAG’s support for the hunger-related Resolutions considered today by the Committee, we would like to offer some reflections on the state of food insecurity in the City’s shelter system. NYLAG clients frequently report that the meals they are served in shelter are too small to abate their hunger. They say they are only allowed to have one serving of each item per meal, and that the serving sizes themselves are very small. As a result, clients in shelter are left perpetually hungry. As we are sure that the Committee on General Welfare is already aware, and as aforementioned, such practices are inevitably damaging to the physical health of shelter residents; food insecurity is disproportionately linked to chronic diseases such as high blood pressure and diabetes.¹¹ For children, the consequences are particularly devastating. Research shows an association between food insecurity and delayed development in young children; risk of chronic illnesses like asthma and anemia; and behavioral problems like hyperactivity, anxiety and aggression in school-age children.¹² Hunger has a direct impact on children’s academic achievement and ensuing economic prosperity.¹³ Inadequately feeding shelter residents only further disenfranchises them. “Providing food” is not the same as providing enough food.

2. Residents Who Have Jobs Don’t Have Access to Meals

¹¹ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger>

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

Shelter residents with a job are often faced with an impossible choice: work or eat. NYLAG clients who are employed or have work assignments report difficulty accessing food served by their shelters. This is due to the fact that shelter meals are served at specific times and if the residents are not present at those times, they cannot get a meal. Additionally, they cannot get a meal when they return to shelter and are not allowed to take their meals early. Thus, if an employed resident wants to eat, he or she cannot go to work, and vice versa. This is further complicated by the fact that recipients of cash public assistance are not awarded the “restaurant allowance” supplement if they reside in a shelter that serves meals. As such, not only do job hours preclude residents from accessing food at their shelter, but those same residents, because they lack the “restaurant allowance,” are left with reduced means with which to purchase food in the community. New policies need to be put into place whereby residents who work or have other commitments can be provided with food at times that work with their schedules. Working shelter residents should not be punished with hunger for being employed.

3. Residents are Not Permitted to Bring in Outside Food

The problem of shelter resident hunger is further amplified by shelter policies that prevent residents from bringing in outside food. When residents miss meals and are prevented from bringing in and/or storing outside food, they are left with little option but to skip a meal. This is particularly harmful for residents with health issues or disabilities that need to eat between meals for their wellbeing or to safely take medication. While residents can be granted reasonable accommodations, the reasonable accommodation process can take months to approve and requires the active cooperation of the resident’s

health care provider. A system must be put into place where residents can eat at non-mealtimes.

These problems with the provision of food in shelters are further exacerbated by the fact that individuals and families who reside in shelters that purport to provide meals, have their public assistance benefits reduced based on the fiction of readily available food. For the reasons outlined above, that equation does not represent the lived reality of NYLAG clients in shelter.

b. Recent Immigrants in Emergency Shelter Have Insufficient Access to Food

In September of 2022, the Mayor determined that our newest New Yorkers were not to be absorbed into the existing shelter system, and instead created a new shelter system that did not comply with the minimum shelter guidelines mandated in New York City and did not provide the residents with adequate assistance transitioning to permanent housing. Among numerous other problems, NYLAG clients residing in these shelters report that they are not being provided with adequate food, and that they are not being served hot food.

Compounding the difficulty for our new immigrant neighbors, most new immigrant shelter residents are not eligible for SNAP benefits.¹⁴ Though many can achieve classification as Permanently Residing Under Color of Law (“PRUCOL”), most commonly by applying for asylum or being paroled into the country, which grants access to Safety Net Assistance benefits through the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, SNAP benefits are largely unavailable to new immigrants in shelter, and their public assistance

¹⁴ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligibility/citizen/non-citizen-policy>

grants are reduced based on the alleged availability of meals in shelter. Our clients consistently report anxiety about food security and must turn to community groups for gap-filling services to address their persistent hunger.

II. Support For Res. 0025-2024: Calling For Passage of S.2258/H.R.3519: The “Hot Foods Act of 2023”

Res. 0025-2024, which calls on Congress to pass and the President to sign, the “Hot Foods Act of 2023,” would inject some much-needed dignity into the SNAP regulations, which at the current moment explicitly exclude “hot foods or hot food products ready for immediate consumption” from SNAP eligibility.¹⁵ Hot foods provide dignity to all those receiving SNAP benefits, and especially to those with special diets, whether as part of their religious practices; due to disabilities; or as a feature of cultural difference. This is particularly pronounced in shelter, where, as referenced above, the reasonable accommodation process impedes residents’ speedy access to appropriate and specialized diets. Moreover, shelters that provide meals do not allow residents access to kitchens, further necessitating those residents’ need for hot food.

Increasing equitable access to hot foods would signal that our Nation’s leaders take seriously the impact of “time poverty,” the weight of which is highlighted in a 2021 study by the USDA, and powerfully cited in Res. 0025. According to that study, nearly a third of participants cited lack of time to prepare meals from scratch as preventing the “primary food preparer from preparing meals that are part of a healthy diet.”¹⁶ Conceptually, “time

¹⁵ U.S.C. Title 7, Chapter 51, Section 2012, Sub-Section (k).

¹⁶ <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SNAP-Barriers-SurveyFindings.pdf>

poverty” allows us to work against the stigma that perniciously suggests that we shouldn’t make public assistance “too comfortable.” Such a framing functions to hold our focus on the various collateral consequences of poverty - the exhaustion, the stress - which themselves are also deeply intertwined with adverse health outcomes.¹⁷

III. Support For Res. 0227-2024: Calling For a Renewed Farm Bill with Increased SNAP Funding

Res. 0227-2024, which calls on Congress to pass, and the President to sign, a renewed Fam Bill, has the potential to expand the reach and effectiveness of SNAP benefits for food insecure Americans and New Yorkers. The fact that SNAP rules and eligibility requirements (and thus the broad outline of its operating expenses) originate in the Farm Bill, which also comprises 12 separate titles of safety net support for American farmers, creates a powerful political and lobbying tension between the American agricultural industry and the American poor.¹⁸ More than 40 million Americans currently receive SNAP benefits, but their lobbying power is minimal in the face of American industry.¹⁹ In the face of efforts to reduce the scope of SNAP assistance, and in support of calls to instead expand its scope, NYLAG is honored to stand with City Council in calling on our federal government to increase funding for food assistance.

IV. Support For Res. 0237-2024: Calling For Passage of S.1488/H.R.3183, the “Enhance Access to SNAP Act of 2023”

¹⁷ <https://bmcpyschology.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40359-020-0395-8>

¹⁸ <https://www.snapttohealth.org/farm-bill-usda/snap-in-the-farm-bill/>

¹⁹ <https://www.npr.org/2023/07/11/1185499996/congress-tackles-food-stamp-changes-in-the-farm-bill>

Res. 0237-2024, which calls on Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the “Enhance Access to SNAP Act,” would remove eligibility disqualifications that exclude otherwise eligible students from receiving SNAP benefits. Expanding access to SNAP benefits cuts against hunger, and its cascading side-effects enumerated above. The Council’s resolution cites powerful reports from Temple University’s Hope Center, which estimate that 39 percent of students at two-year post-secondary programs and 29 percent of students at four-year programs experienced food insecurity in 2020.²⁰ By eliminating eligibility disqualifications for college students, we can dramatically reduce the number of students suffering hunger and its health and welfare consequences.

V. Support for Res. Res 0057-2024

Resolution 0057-2024, calling for the State of New York to provide food support benefits for those not eligible for federal SNAP programming, would provide our new immigrant neighbors with essential food assistance. Modeled on the California Food Assistance Program, which broadened eligibility requirements for immigrants to include lawful permanent residents, refugees, and asylum seekers, even when they had been in the country for fewer than five years, such a New York program expansion would assist our new neighbors in finding stability for themselves and their families. California has gone even further - providing food protection to entirely undocumented immigrants who are over the age of 55. We would be wise to follow California's lead. We know the risks of food insecurity to be dire - and that the reduction of that insecurity can have profound health

²⁰ <https://hope.temple.edu/sites/hope/files/media/document/HopeSurveyReport2021.pdf>

and wellness benefits. Beyond the physical and physiological, providing food to those who are here to build a better life offers them dignity. We very much support all efforts to do so.

We thank the Committee on General Welfare for the work it has done to facilitate services for vulnerable New Yorkers, for holding this hearing and taking this opportunity to engage the community's perspectives on hunger and food insecurity in New York City, and for uplifting the voices of its constituents so that the federal government can hear them. We hope to continue to be a resource for you going forward.

Respectfully submitted,

New York Legal Assistance Group

**Testimony of Part of the Solution
Before the Committee on General Welfare
Preliminary Budget Hearing
May 29, 2024**

Introductions

Thank you, Deputy Speaker Ayala and members of the City Council General Welfare Committee for holding today's hearing on the Mayor's FY25 preliminary budget. My name is Christina Hanson, and I am the Executive Director at Part of the Solution or POTS, a community-based nonprofit organization that has been fighting poverty and food insecurity in the Bronx for over four decades.

I want to start by expressing our appreciation to the City Council for opening spaces like this, where we can share our experiences and elevate the voices of the community we serve. Based on what we see and hear in the community, we are convinced that City government needs to increase its efforts to end hunger in the City.

Context.

Last year's New York True Cost of Living Report¹ shed light on a stark reality: for over half of New York households, covering necessities like food, housing, and childcare is an insurmountable challenge. That rate exceeds 80% in the Bronx communities we serve.

According to the Report: "At least three in four households living in those communities (Central Bronx) do not have the earning that meet cost of basic essentials like housing, health care, food, transportation, and child care."

At Part of the Solution, the demand for our services has not abated since the COVID-19 pandemic. For many of our clients in the most critical of situations, including those facing homelessness, they come to us desperate for access to food. Clients prioritize paying rent to make sure they are not evicted. They will sacrifice their access to food and rely on organizations like POTS to make it through the month.

In addition, for clients who have overcome many challenges, by securing a steady job or finding a stable housing arrangement, the wages they are paid are just not enough to cover the cost of essentials in the city.

Take Angela as an example, a member of our community who is currently employed and working in the education sector. Angela belongs to a family where more than one of the members is employed and their income surpasses the threshold that gives her access to many public benefits. Despite this, Angela considers her household to be food insecure and she has mentioned how she sometimes skips meals to make sure her kids have enough to eat. She adds that the decrease in quality in school meals have made it even harder for her to make sure her kids access all the nutritional values they need.

Angela is concerned about her community and joined the other five members of our neighborhood in our Community Advisory Committee, a space that POTS created so that community members could share their thoughts about neighborhood issues. On the subject of food insecurity, the committee provides the following statement:

¹ Prepared by United Way of New York City and the Fund for the City of New York. Read more here: <https://unitedwaynyc.org/true-cost-of-living/>

“POTS’ Community Advisory Committee stresses that the five boroughs are facing hunger. The added costs of rent and taxes, among others, make it impossible to cover the cost of the food that is needed. Salaries have not increased at the same pace as prices.

The Committee is concerned about the quality of food that is available. Children are hungry at home and school meals are not always ideal. A hungry child cannot focus on learning.

Seniors are not always accessing the most nourishing food that will give them the nutritional values they need at their age.

Hunger is real in the city and people are forced to make the most of limited resources, including expired food to survive.”

Our ask.

POTS believes that hunger in New York City is unacceptable. This is one of the richest cities in the world. With the political will and resources available, we can have both short- and long-term solutions to food insecurity.

We are concerned about the trends we see in proposing cuts to public programs assisting the hungry, like Community Food Connection (CFC) and the school meals program, which are a matter of survival for the most vulnerable families and individuals. Programs across the city, State and at the Federal level should prioritize food stability and accessibility, as taking care of this fundamental need is a cornerstone for households and individuals to be able to survive and dedicate their time and efforts to find solutions to other of their medium to long-term needs, like finding better employment or housing arrangements.

As such, we ask city officials to consider expanding the budget for public programs that increase the quantity and quality of food available and support the programs that distribute the food to vulnerable New Yorkers.

We would also like to stress the importance of community based nonprofit organizations connecting public benefits with their intended recipients. Our expertise, connection with the community and understanding of their unique challenges makes us an efficient partner in addressing poverty and hunger. We encourage the city to strengthen the programs that allow us to carry out our work for sustainable and long-lasting results in addressing food insecurity in NYC.

Finally, we thank the City Council General Welfare Committee for allowing us to share our expertise and share the experiences of our communities. We at POTS look forward to partnering with you to create a food secure New York City.

Christina Hanson
Executive Director, Part of the Solution
chanson@potsbronx.org

**New York City Council Fiscal Year 2025
Executive Budget Hearings
Finance Committee jointly with the Committee on General Welfare
Wed, May 29th at 10:00am**

Good afternoon,

My name is Afsana Monir and I am the Founder and Executive Director of Project New Yorker. Thank you very much to Chair Ayala and Chair Brannan for holding this hearing and providing this opportunity to testify.

Project New Yorker was founded in 2017 as a learning center for the low-income South Asian immigrant women and youth in Queens. Majority of our members are of Bangladeshi descent. Our mission is to improve the livelihood of under-resourced immigrant women and youth by providing social and economic empowerment services required to achieve self-sufficiency. As one of the few organizations explicitly serving the Bangladeshi population in NYC, Project New Yorker has emerged as a go-to resource for South Asian families.

Project New Yorker urges the New York City Council to prioritize the immediate needs of all asylum seekers seeking safety and refuge within our city. These individuals, fleeing persecution and violence, are our newest neighbors, and it is our moral responsibility to extend unwavering humanitarian support to them. With the proposed \$2.4 billion allocation, crucial resources will be directed towards establishing essential services such as short-term shelters, comprehensive case management, and robust legal assistance, ensuring their protection and well-being. The funding is particularly vital in guaranteeing their prompt relocation and resettlement, fostering a more inclusive society that sends a clear message: all immigrants are welcomed to our city.

However, we express concern that the current funding may not adequately provide essential resources and services to all asylum seekers. Project New Yorker regularly works with recent immigrants and asylum seekers to adjust to their new lives and overcome barriers in resettlement. We offer several adult education, employment readiness, and youth development that attempt to bridge the gaps in services for recent immigrants and asylum seekers. From our first hand experience, I can testify that these funding priorities are critical.

I urge that the City Council sustain and increase funding for the following:

- **Asylum Seeker Response** (Aid to Localities OTDA)
 - \$2.4 Billion: would aid to NYC for humanitarian aid, short term shelter, case management, legal services, assistance programs, immunization and communicable disease testing, relocation and resettlement, national guard expenses (or any other state dept)
 - \$122M - Floyd Bennett Field
 - \$2.397M - Services related to human trafficking program (p. 708)
 - \$2M - Enhanced services to refugees and other refugee resettlement

- program-eligible individuals
- \$5M - Enhanced services to refugees and other refugee resettlement program-eligible individuals
- \$5,000,000 - Program to provide services to non-citizens
- \$1.5M - Refugee and Immigrant Student Welcome grants program
- \$25M - Migrant and asylum seeker resettlement
- **Funding (Office of New Americans) - Aid to Localities**
 - \$64.2M total - breakdown below:
 - \$44.2M Services and expenses to programs for non-citizens including:
 - Case management, ESL, job training and placement assistance, post-employment services (job retention), services to est. and maintain permanent residence, legal services, case management and retraining for immigrant engineers
 - \$20M additional expenses and services for non-citizens relating to Legal services, case management, ESL, job training and placement assistance, post-employment services to ensure job retention.
- **Child Care**
 - Maintained \$5M in Child Care funding for NYC to provide grants to offset the cost of child care for working families with incomes up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level who are ineligible for child care assistance under Title 5-C of the social services law. (aka Immigration status)

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,

Afsana Monir
Founder and Executive Director
Project New Yorker

Culinary Arts Training Program



Project Renewal's mission is to end the cycle of homelessness by empowering individuals and families to renew their lives with health, homes, and jobs.

One of Project Renewal's job training and placement programs is its Culinary Arts Training Program (CATP), which has prepared unemployed, homeless, and at-risk New Yorkers for careers in the culinary industry since 1995. Through classroom training, internships, and job placement and retention services, participants develop in-demand skills and launch careers.



We have placed more than 2,000 New Yorkers with histories of homelessness, incarceration, unemployment, and/or substance use disorder in culinary jobs



Nearly 75% of graduates who are placed in jobs retain their position for at least six months



CATP offers six months of classroom training; internship experience in nonprofit and restaurant kitchens; and support services

“The Culinary Arts Training Program is preparing me for a career in the food industry, which has always been my dream. I think CATP can help people like me because it can help us get our lives on the right track in an accessible way.”

**JEANETTE
CATP STUDENT**

PROGRAM SITE

Borden Avenue
Veteran's Residence

PEOPLE SERVED

Veterans and adults with histories of homelessness, incarceration, unemployment, under-employment, and substance use disorder.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Six months, with 12 weeks of classroom training and a 12-week internship placement with local restaurants or nonprofit kitchens that serve New Yorkers in need.

Funding from the City Council makes CATP possible. We are asking for your continued support. Help students like Jeanette renew their lives through promising culinary careers!

April 16, 2024

Dear: Honorable Council member

I Swandi Creighton Reside in Brooklyn N.Y. ~~THANK~~
I've worked in the medical field for 14 years and I loved it. Then the pandemic hit and I was forced to leave do to refusing the vaccination, eventually I did get the shot, went back to the medical field for a year and I wasn't happy. so I started cooking in my home and selling plates everyday the word got around and I started doing popup shop, Birthday parties, Graduation etc. and I realized I truly enjoy cooking. I wanted to further my cooking career. Someone told me about Project Renewal. I called up set an appointment did the orientation and started the program. Chef John is amazing he's taught me how to hold the knives, cutting skills, heating temperature, and making sauce from scratch. My future goals is to have my own food truck and travel from state to state. if it wasn't for Project Renewal Culinary arts I wouldn't of had the opportunity to enhance my horizons

Thank you
Swandi Creighton

Dear Honorable
Council Member,"

Edwin RIVERA
April, 16, 2024

It has been a wonderful experience since I started this Culinary training with the "Project Renewal Program". I have learned a lot and there is so much more to learn. The Chef, our instructor, is amazing, very professional and caring human being. We learn so much from him, not only we learn about food industry but also to become a better person, building up character, responsibilities, morals, human relationship as well to become a productive member of society.

I hope that this school will be here for ever because it will help a lot of people. I am very grateful for this program and for all the members that have made this possible.

Thank you so much...!
Edwin Rivera

Dear Council Member

My name is Kaleem King I am 23 years old and live in Brooklyn New York. I come from a family of entrepreneurs with my grandmother having her own hair salon and grandfather with a floral shop always inspired me to want to become one my self and have a business of my own for many years I was indecisive with what I actually wanted to do either regarding my skills in art or fashion cause Im very much into the modern culture and always just wanted to do something that collabs the things Im actually interested in and with cooking food it has always been a passion of mine because Ive always been able to put my own style or swagger you would say to the things I do since a young age. Always payed close attention to detail and love the praise I get when people actually try my food and that inspires me to do better and actually accomplish the goals I set to accomplish and ~~join~~ joining this program I was looking for help to push me in the right direction and give me the proper support and training to be successful in the food industry and I feel that attending this program with "Chef John" and everybody been the right decision. My expectation were certainly met and feel that the culinary arts program can help those looking to take part. I am very grateful for the opportunity and hope others get to feel the same

Sincerely Kaleem King



NYC Council 5/29 Testimonial

Good morning Madam Chair Ayala and members of the committee.

My name is Susana Camarena and I am the Executive Director of the Tacombi Foundation, an established 501(c)3 and Tacombi's philanthropic arm. As you may know, Tacombi is a NYC based company operating 21 Mexican taquerias in the United States, 12 of which are based across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens.

The mission of the Tacombi Foundation is to advance Mexican and Hispanic immigrant communities through food accessibility, education, and employment training, which is why I am here today.

In April of 2020, the Foundation launched the Tacombi Community Kitchen program (or TCK for short) as a response to the food insecurity crisis exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Since then, the Tacombi Foundation has turned TCK into a food accessibility program and has provided over 1 million meals. The TCK program has continued to grow by leveraging the kitchens of the 21 Tacombi restaurants to produce over 8,000 meals every week and distribute them through a network that consists of over 30 community based organizations across Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx and which are embedded in neighborhoods with large concentrations of Latino and Hispanic communities, many of whom are recent arrivals.

According to the latest data from the US Department of Agriculture, 1 in 5 Latinos in the United States experience food insecurity, and are 2 times more likely to be food insecure than their white neighbors. According to 2022 data from the New York State Comptroller's Office, the food insecurity rate for Hispanic New Yorkers is 22%. In our extensive work through the Community Kitchen program, we have seen a bigger demand for food - one which is much larger today than it was at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the program launched.

For this reason, we are here today to highlight the issues affecting Hispanic immigrant communities going through food insecurity and we call upon the City Council to consider all measures that would improve the living conditions and provide dignity through food for all New Yorkers.

To continue our work of dignifying people through food of providing reliable, wholesome, and culturally relevant meals to families facing food insecurity, The Tacombi Foundation has requested discretionary funding under the Food Access and Benefits, and Welcome NYC initiatives for Fiscal Year 2025 for which we hope to be considered and work alongside the City Council on this pressing issue.

Thank you.



TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

New York City Council Committee on General Welfare Oversight – Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City

**Submitted by:
Ariel Savransky, UJA-Federation of New York
May 29th, 2024**

Thank you, Chairperson Ayala and members of the Committee on General Welfare, for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Ariel Savransky, and I am a Senior Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA-Federation of New York.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. Central to UJA's mission is to care for those in need—identifying and meeting the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. UJA supports an expansive network of nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services and allocates over \$180 million each year to combat poverty and food insecurity, nurture mental health and well-being, counter antisemitism and strengthen Jewish life, and respond to crises here and across the globe.

Addressing Food Insecurity

Food access continues to be a concern among New Yorkers. As a result of the pandemic and the ensuing economic downturn, as well as high rates of inflation, 39.5 percent of adults lived in a household at risk for food insecurity in 2022. Households with children were 48.4 percent more likely to be at risk of food insecurity compared to 34.7 percent of those without children. New York food pantries and soup kitchens are reporting that they are unable to meet demand and that they served more people in 2023 versus in 2022.

Although UJA's nonprofit partners quickly shifted their operations to better support New York's emergency food efforts by expanding their food pantry operations; helping clients gain access to SNAP and other benefits and raising private dollars to deliver meals to homebound older adults, there is still tremendous unmet need.

UJA-Federation thanks the council for introducing Resolutions 25, 57, 227 and 237 which uplift opportunities for the state and the country to implement programs and policies that will support the most vulnerable individuals and families and offers the following contributions:

The Farm Bill

UJA advocates for a Farm Bill that increases funding for SNAP and other life-saving food and nutrition assistance programs. In addition to increased funding, there is also a great need to increase the availability of kosher and halal food within The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). UJA-Federation supports Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council) to operate the largest kosher food bank and pantry network in the country. This network serves an average of 200,000 people a month, including a network of halal pantries that meet the dietary needs of Muslim Americans. UJA-Federation offers the following recommendations to legislators and policymakers to be taken into account in continuing conversations regarding the Farm Bill, specifically around kosher and halal food access:

- 1) **Create an office within USDA FNS that is directly responsible for ensuring equal access for kosher- and halal-observant Americans within all eligible programs** including but not limited to The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants, and Children (WIC).

The two largest groups of Americans with religiously informed diets are Jewish and Muslim Americans. While these groups represent a minority within the United States, this is a minority of millions that requires adequate representation within USDA programs. Americans with religiously informed diets cannot subsist on USDA programs as they are currently constructed. Therefore, dedicated staffing within USDA is required to ensure adequate procurement and distribution within all USDA programs. A dedicated office would support these efforts.

- 2) **Improve kosher and halal provisions within TEFAP.** It is imperative that the USDA set a date for establishing a plan to meet the needs of those requiring kosher and halal food. If adequate commitments about expanding the available TEFAP commodities cannot be secured, then direct allocations to culturally competent providers within metropolitan statistical areas home to a high percentage of Jewish and Muslim residents should be required in the interim. In addition, UJA urges that:
 - a. The requirement that kosher and halal TEFAP commodities be cost-neutral should be removed, ensuring that more kosher and halal products will be included among the TEFAP offerings.
 - b. Ensure certification standards for kosher and halal products. This would require a minimum amount of kosher and halal products per category and/or a minimum percentage of all TEFAP Products to ensure a pantry bag can be compatible with USDA MyPlate Guidelines.
 - c. Remove TEFAP Attestation and/or replace this with federal community eligibility requirement based on other means tested programs and their uptake in a given geographic location.
 - d. Require states to include, or at a minimum engage, emergency food organizations at all levels, including those who represent diverse communities and communities with specific religious dietary restrictions, direct service providers, and emergency food recipients with lived experience in their TEFAP planning. This includes requiring all states to establish TEFAP advisory boards composed of food banks, pantries/direct service providers, and clients with lived experience.

- 3) Require USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) to report on the needs of communities with specific dietary requirements, including religious requirements, on a semi-regular basis, possibly every five years.** USDA can and should do more to understand the scope, scale, and location of need throughout the country, addressing a gap in food insecurity data. This will help to address hunger for all Americans. This requirement should be codified in the text of the 2023 Farm Bill and made part of the regular reporting requirement for USDA ERS.

Many communities with strict religious diets have been marginalized and targeted in the past as a result of antisemitism and anti-Muslim biases, so there are very good reasons that the US Census and the Annual American Community Survey do not ask questions about religion. In conducting this research, the USDA must account for these communities' privacy needs while working to better understand their needs. USDA ERS can work with local community benefits organizations in this work.

- 4) Improve benefits access through SNAP by:**
- a. Removing the 3-month time limit from the SNAP program and reducing or removing the 80-hour work requirement.
 - b. Providing annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to benefits that consider the actual cost of living in the region where benefits are utilized.
 - c. Removing eligibility exclusions, including the prohibition of SNAP benefits for recipients with a prior felony conviction.
 - d. Utilizing the low-cost meal plan to set the floor for SNAP benefits rather than the thrifty meal plan.
 - e. Allowing broad eligibility for all immigrants.
 - i. Allow "qualified alien status" to be given to visa holders and anyone else who has immigrated to this country.
 - ii. Remove the 5-year minimum from "qualified alien status" and allow anyone who has met this status to receive SNAP immediately.
 - iii. Restore eligibility and access to critical services for immigrants with sponsors.
 - f. Extending recertification periods, especially for older adults.
 - g. Allowing for broader enrollment access through remote, digital, or hybrid means.
 - h. Broadening college student access to SNAP.
 - i. Remove meal plan limitations on SNAP eligibility.
 - ii. Remove work requirements.
 - iii. Remove age restrictions.
 - iv. Remove government program disqualifications.
 - i. Additional requests UJA supports:
 - i. Boost SNAP benefits for families with children forced to choose between food and shelter.
 - ii. Boost SNAP benefits for older Americans forced to choose between food and medicine.
 - iii. Boost the SNAP minimum monthly benefit, which currently is only \$20.
 - iv. Remove the restriction on hot prepared foods to expand SNAP customers' choices.
 - v. Eliminate asset limits on SNAP and other benefits eligibility.

SNAP for All

UJA-Federation supports Resolution 57 calling on New York State to create a program to provide food benefits for those not eligible for existing benefits, including anyone over 55 meeting income eligibility. California recently enacted a program through their state budget to fund the inclusion of undocumented, income eligible adults over age 55 into their state funded nutrition benefit program CalFresh. In addition to the many long term undocumented families here in New York, there is an unprecedented number of asylum seekers, migrant families and refugees arriving every week. This program would help meet their nutritional needs and take pressure off the emergency food system.

Currently, along with partners at the city and state level, UJA-Federation is supportive of the state level bill S.7692 (Salazar)/A5933 (Gonzalez-Rojas). This bill recommends the creation of a state level task force which would include representatives from OTDA as well as anti-hunger and immigrant rights advocates from across the state to explore the formation of a SNAP-like state funded nutrition program open to undocumented families in our state. This important step will help to illustrate the tremendous impact this program could have on those who are not eligible for SNAP.

FY 25 Budget recommendations

UJA-Federation also submits the following budget recommendations to ensure that the local food system and supply chain remains intact, that all families can access the food and support they need, and that front line community-based organizations (CBOs) can continue to respond effectively to the increased need for emergency food:

1) Increase funding to a total of \$60 million for the Community Food Connection program (CFC), formerly the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP)

- a. The Mayor's Executive budget proposes baseline funding of \$23.8 million. We urge the Administration to restore and baseline the \$30 million that was allocated for FY24 as well as invest additional funding for a total of \$60 Million. This will accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program, rising cost of produce, and continued need, including the continuing influx of asylum seekers and other migrants seeking refuge in New York City. This increase will also address the inefficiencies found in using third-party vendors, particularly in the procurement of kosher and halal items, by allowing for spending flexibility and direct purchasing. This approach not only aims to optimize program funding but also ensures the diverse dietary needs of the community are met more cost-effectively and efficiently. Additionally, we advocate for the provision of technical assistance to facilitate the effective use of funds and the exploration of alternative methods to supplement dietary options, ensuring diverse community needs are met efficiently and cost-effectively.

2) Maintain NYC Benefits

- a. The NYC Benefits program enables CBOs to conduct benefits outreach and connect eligible New Yorkers to the billions of dollars of government benefits that are currently underutilized. This helps to ensure that New Yorkers are aware of the supports available, that accessing those supports is easy and efficient and that New Yorkers enroll and stay enrolled in these support programs. As a result

of the OTPS freeze, the funding for this program has only been released through June 30th, 2024. The original RFP was intended to run for three years and we are only in the second half of the first year. UJA thanks the Administration for investing \$4.6 million in NYC Benefits in the Executive budget but total funding for this program is \$10 million. UJA urges the Administration to **maintain \$10 million for the NYC Benefits program in FY25 and ensure all 36 CBO providers are able to continue their essential work.**

- 3) **Allocate additional funds within the Human Resource Administration towards nutrition benefit program enrollment and outreach.**
 - a. At the height of the pandemic, when rates of food insecurity had nearly doubled in NYC, only 50 percent of New Yorkers who were facing severe food hardship were enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). UJA urges the City to increase funding for the agency and CBOs engaged in benefits outreach to meet ongoing demand and improve the administration of critical food benefit programs.
- 4) **Allocate additional funds to facilitate a joint application system between the SNAP program (managed by NYC HRA) and the WIC program (managed by NYS DOH).** Currently, New Yorkers eligible for multiple benefits must fill out individual applications for each benefit for which they are eligible to apply. According to the MyCity plan laid out by the Mayor, the goal of the Administration is to create one online portal with a universal application and verification process so that New Yorkers can qualify for multiple benefits simultaneously. In addition, the Mayor proposes combining all City agencies' data onto one universal platform so that any agency can assist any New Yorker with any benefit. UJA urges the Council and the Administration to work together to ensure this portal is developed and rolled out. As a first step in this process, UJA encourages the City and the State to work together to create a joint application for the SNAP program (run by NYC HRA) and the WIC program (run by NYS DOH).
- 5) **Evaluate the newly relaunched Grocery to Go Program.** This program emerged in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic as food assistance for homebound New Yorkers and has since been redesigned to provide food insecure New Yorkers who also have hypertension and/or diabetes with monthly credit to purchase groceries through an online marketplace of local grocery stores. Most participants that were originally participating in the Get Food program do not meet the new requirements for the Groceries to Go Program due to their physical health status.

To make the program more impactful and ensure unspent credits do not go to waste, UJA strongly recommends: 1) expanding the list for diet related conditions to widen the scale of the program, 2) allowing for the participation of young adults who meet the other eligibility criteria and 3) allowing more than one participant from each household to qualify to account for older adults who may be living with roommates.

Finally, UJA encourages the program to allow enrollees to have the freedom to use the credits on food items of their choosing that reflect need, cultural preference, dietary or medical requirements and personal taste. UJA strongly encourages the DOHMH not to apply additional limitations to eligible foods and to maintain that Grocery to Go credits can purchase SNAP approved items.

- 6) **Invest in home delivered meals.** Like so many New York City human services contracts, the rates provided for the HDM program fall substantially below the cost of service-delivery. **The HDM program requires an additional \$12 million investment to increase rates to \$15.31 per meal.** On average, providers report a \$2.53 per meal deficit; however, this does not account for increased costs of kosher or halal meals, which follow strict and costly dietary guidelines, and contractors are required to provide.

Beyond simple meal provision, the Home Delivered Meals program provides important support for homebound older adults. Recipients of home delivered meals are chronically disabled due to heart disease, mobility challenges, diabetes, arthritis, or severe vision impairment and are reliant on these supports, that serve as a critical lifeline for these older New Yorkers. Regular meal deliveries provide health and psychological benefits beyond nutrition and can act as an access point for other critical support services, which help older adults continue to live healthily and safely in their homes.

Recently, NYC Aging awarded new contracts for the HDM program, which will start in FY25. While the RFP made clear that changes were coming to the program, two contracts were awarded to for-profit caterers that provided meals during the GetFood program. Many clients found GetFood meals unsatisfactory and inappropriate; older adults with dental issues complained of receiving meals with apples, nuts and seeds, and hard crackers. Keeping in mind the recent DocGo scandal, NYC Aging chose to award contracts previously held by trusted nonprofits with successful track records to for-profit caterers raises many questions. We urge the Council to investigate this matter.

Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Nonprofit Human Services Providers

UJA and our partners thank the City Council for the \$100 million workforce investment over the last two years and the \$50 million investment next year. We are also grateful to the City Council and administration for agreeing to invest an additional \$741 million in New York City's human services workforce by committing to fund a 3% cost-of-living adjustment for FY 25 through FY 27.

A COLA is a significant step towards addressing the historic underfunding and lack of investment in the human services sector, as these workers do some of the most important jobs in our communities yet are underpaid and undervalued. As government is the predominant funder of human services through government contracts, this has resulted in nearly 25% of all human services workers qualifying for food stamps in 2016-2018. Low wages also have a sweeping effect on workplace conditions and the outcome of programs, with high staff turnover and vacancy rates resulting in heavy and unsustainable workloads.

Years of underfunding the sector has resulted in the human services workforce being some of the lowest compensated workers in New York City's economy. These are workers who do some of the most important jobs in our communities; they take care of our aging neighbors, assist families in staying in their homes, provide workforce training, work with people to overcome substance abuse and addiction, and help people from all walks of life in the event of an emergency. The COLA investment is a step in the right direction of ensuring city-contracted human services workers are paid fairly.

Conclusion

UJA-Federation of New York thanks the New York City Council for the support of these vital programs that assist New York City's most vulnerable and the organizations that serve them. Thank you for your time and please contact me at savranskya@ujafedny.org with any questions.



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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council**

**Committee on General Welfare
Council Member Diana I. Ayala, Chair**

Oversight - Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City

**Submitted by Paula Inhargue, Policy Analyst
May 29, 2024**

Thank you, Chair Ayala and members of the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare for convening today's hearing. United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing neighborhood settlement houses that reach over 770,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life at 770 locations. A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers. UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a broad range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development. We also provide customized professional development and peer learning to build the skills and leadership capabilities of settlement house staff at all levels. UNH members provide a wide variety of services to their communities such as providing support to access benefits and case management for HRA programs, including those that address food insecurity.

Our testimony at today's hearing will focus on food assistance and benefits access priorities to support and stabilize the food insecurity crisis in New York City.

Food Assistance & Benefits Access

It is crucial to address issues of hunger, food insecurity, and poverty in New York City. Moreover, the difficulties arising from high levels of inflation and significant increases in housing costs, as well as the influx of asylum seekers, pose an unprecedented challenge to our food system and are further exacerbating the growing poverty and food insecurity crisis for families.

A winter 2022-2023 survey¹ of more than a 1,000 settlement house families within the UNH network found that food insecurity remains widespread. A third of surveyed parents said that they visited a food bank in the past seven days. Nearly one in four (23 percent) respondents reported that they were "sometimes unable to afford food for their children," with an additional 10 percent reporting they were "often" or "always" unable to do so.

¹ [Settlement House American Rescue Plan \(SHARP\) Wave 2 Report](#)

More recent data from the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey also confirms that insufficient access to food remains an issue for many low-income New York families: nearly a quarter (24 percent) of families in the New York City metro area earning less than \$25,000 a year reported that they did not have enough food in their household within the past week.

Given the deep needs around food insecurity in New York City, we ask the Council to support the following initiatives in the FY25 City budget:

Increase funding to \$60 Million for the Community Food Connection (CFC)

The Community Food Connection (CFC) program, formerly known as the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP), plays a vital role in CBOs' efforts to combat food insecurity. Through strategic partnerships with local businesses, farmers, and dedicated volunteers, providers have expanded the program's reach and improved the quality and variety of food available to those in need. Several settlement houses in UNH's network receive this funding, including WHEDco and Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC). In WHEDco's case, their weekly Community Food Pantry serves approximately 65 households per week and approximately 3,400 individuals per year. In FY24, CFC approved \$70,000 for food purchases. This amount is enabling WHEDco to provide an additional 20 bags (comprising 540 meals) of free, fresh produce and groceries that they distribute weekly. Overall, providers have emphasized the critical importance of continued or increased CFC food funding to the CBO's ability to address the growing need for emergency food resources in their respective neighborhoods.

The program had a one-time funding increase last year, taking it from \$23.8 million to \$53.8 million, but was cut back to \$23.8 million in this year's Preliminary Budget. While the Council's response included a proposal of \$59 million to enhance the Community Food Connection, this issue was not addressed in the Executive Budget.

The City must restore the previous funding to the CFC and expand it to \$60 million to sustain and grow the program, allowing providers to effectively allocate resources and keep supporting the growing needs of asylum seekers. This involves securing funding for procuring fresh produce, addressing staffing requirements, and enhancing community outreach efforts. This increase will also address the inefficiencies found in using third-party vendors, particularly in the procurement of kosher and halal items, by allowing for spending flexibility and direct purchasing. This approach not only aims to optimize program funding but also ensures the diverse dietary needs of the community are met more cost-effectively and efficiently. Additionally, we advocate for the provision of technical assistance to facilitate the effective use of funds and the exploration of alternative methods to supplement dietary options.

Restore the Council's Food Pantry initiative to previous funding levels

The Council should restore its Food Pantry initiative to FY23 levels, recognizing its important role in addressing food insecurity and supporting communities in need. Pantries are an essential part of the City's efforts to address food insecurity, especially because anyone can receive support from a pantry regardless of immigration status, while programs such as SNAP are limited in this regard. We were disappointed to see this funding cut by over \$300,000 in FY24, and urge the Council to restore the total funding to at least FY23 levels of \$7.63 million.

Address Older Adult Hunger

The Executive Budget makes no new investments to address high rates of older adult hunger and rising inflation costs, and rather makes additional cuts. In the FY 2025 Budget, **the City needs to**

invest at least an additional \$65.3 million to combat older adult hunger, focused on the home delivered meals program and congregate meals at older adult centers.

Home Delivered Meals Funding

We call on NYC Aging to implement a \$15.31 per-meal reimbursement rate for the home delivered meals (HDM) program, a \$2.53 increase per meal which would require a \$12 million overall funding increase, to meet rising inflation costs. We thank the Council for including this rate in its budget response and will continue to advocate for this rate to be included in the final budget. This timing is crucial to increase rates because the program is undergoing an RFP, with new contracts planned to begin on July 1, 2024 and last for three years.

Home Delivered Meals Contracts

NYC Aging recently announced awards for the home delivered meals procurement. While we knew the number of contracts would shrink from 22 to 17 lead contractors, we are concerned by reports that several nonprofit providers lost their contracts in favor of for-profit companies.

Switching this program to for-profit vendors will likely compromise the integrity of the HDM program model. This program has traditionally been more than just a food delivery service; rather, it is a social services program that supports older adults holistically. In addition to the case management program that formally refers and works with clients, the drivers themselves are trained in light-touch case assistance. Drivers frequently identify problems in the home, for example, if an older adult has changed behavior and needs a referral, is no longer being served by an aide, or in extreme cases has taken a fall or worse. It is difficult to imagine a private catering service fulfilling this important role.

In addition, the City has a poor track record in relying on private vendors for older adult meal delivery. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the GetFood NYC program initially relied heavily on private caterers. Unfortunately, there were many well-documented [cases](#) of poor meal quality during that period. At the time, UNH's members shared frequent complaints from older adults including food that was difficult for seniors to chew, low availability and quality of culturally-appropriate meals, delivery mistakes like missing meals or food left out in hallways to spoil, and poor communication with the deliverers. This led the City to reverse course and rely on the nonprofit network more for meal delivery. The two private vendors that we are aware were selected for new HDM awards were both previously GetFood vendors.

As another concern, many of the nonprofit providers have made significant investments in infrastructure like kitchen equipment, which in many cases was paid for by the City. We are concerned about the financial prudence of now removing contracts from those providers.

Nonprofit HDM providers have served their communities for decades in many cases, and they have clearly proven the value of their services beyond simple meal delivery. We are very dismayed by these new awards and urge NYC Aging to allow the existing nonprofit network to continue to provide meals to their neighbors, either by intentional subcontracting or by reissuing the RFP.

Finally, to date, there has been limited communication between NYC Aging and providers regarding the transition to new providers, for both the current home delivered meal providers and the case management providers who will potentially need to refer clients to a new provider on July 1 (as of this hearing date, we have heard from at least one provider that they received a contract extension for three months, but we have not confirmed this information systemwide). At a minimum, there must be a plan for existing clients to continue receiving their meals with no interruption in service, and with a

limited time frame until the start date we encourage systemwide contract extensions to help ease this transition.

Home Delivered Meals for People on MLTC Plans

We are extremely concerned about NYC Aging's policy of refusing HDM services to any older adult who is on a Managed Long Term Care (MLTC) plan. As we learned at the Executive budget hearing, this policy is responsible for over 2,500 older adults being unable to receive meals over the last year, and our settlement house members note they are frequently forced to refuse meals to older people in need. NYC Aging stated at the Executive Budget hearing that they received new guidance from the State Office for the Aging about its ability to provide meals to these clients, but that the guidance was not clear enough for them to feel comfortable proceeding. We strongly urge the Council to mediate a resolution to this problem by convening relevant parties at the State and City levels.

Older Adult Center Meals

We reiterate our long-time calls to increase funding for congregate meals at older adult centers (OACs) to address long-standing underinvestment and inflation. This year, the City must restore the \$7 million PEG cut to older adult center meals from the FY24 Adopted Budget and include at least \$46.3 million to cover inflation costs, for a total of \$53.3 million in new funding.

Continuing Grab and Go Meals at Older Adult Centers

We support the option for grab and go meals at all OACs that want to offer them and regardless of whether they were included in contracts that were signed during the pandemic. Food insecurity remains high among older adults, and anything the City can do to address these needs should be embraced. We support Council Member Hudson's legislation that would address this issue, Intro 237-2024.

Baseline funding for the NYC Benefits program in FY25 and outyears, and ensure all 36 CBO providers are able to continue their essential work

Settlement houses and community-based organizations play a vital role in bridging the gap between the government and the community. NYC Benefits is a new program established in 2022 that formalizes that relationship by supporting community outreach and benefits enrollment in neighborhoods across the City. Through this program, CBOs deploy dedicated staff members to help their community access benefits such as SNAP, cash assistance, affordable housing, Medicaid and tax assistance, among others; with a holistic approach that addresses various areas of need. Having local, in person, one-to-one support for an individual navigating benefits applications results in fewer application errors and more successfully completed applications, as well as greater outreach in communities, thus increasing the number of people receiving the benefits to which they are entitled. Many NYC Benefits grantees report working with individuals to submit new applications for various benefits, meaning a greater utilization of state and federal benefits and offering more economic security for families across New York City.

A key strength of NYC Benefits lies in the collaborative processes between CBOs and the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA), which allows for CBOs to have accurate and up to date information about trends in benefits enrollment, such as the prevalence of SNAP skimming which steals benefits from recipients. It also allows HRA to have feedback about application processes, as well as to troubleshoot on particularly complex cases. This program has shown HRA's ability to be nimble and respond to emergent needs, and collaborating with CBOs with geographic and

population-specific focuses allows it to reach different populations and offer a broader range of support.

NYC Benefits providers have cited the promise and early results of this program, and cite the collaborative nature with HRA as a great strength and potential model for other human services programs moving forward. Many CBOs have cited success stories from the early months of the program. For example, BronxWorks was able to serve over 800 people and help submit more than 680 applications for services like child care subsidies, food stamps and immigration services in 2023, and a high number of other providers have reported similar numbers. Sunnyside Community Services' engagement with NYC Benefits has been pivotal in addressing unique challenges faced by families with mixed immigration statuses. Support for their clients includes immediate relief through One-Shot Deals, SNAP, or Cash Assistance, in addition to assistance in navigating long-term needs like applying for public housing and entering housing lotteries, thereby addressing both the immediate and future needs. CBOs also play a critical role in enlightening and guiding families through the process of securing benefits for their eligible children, an opportunity often overlooked due to lack of awareness or understanding of the system.

After several months of uncertainty about whether contracts and funding would continue beyond FY24, on April 17th, HRA announced to providers that their contracts would continue for an additional 3 years. This is very good news for the future of this program. However, the Executive Budget included a one-time \$4.6 million investment in new needs funding for this program in FY25, which does not appear to be baselined. It remains unclear from reading the budget documents how much funding this program receives in total, and whether it is sufficient to support the 36 providers and three technical assistance providers. We believe the program total is currently closer to \$10 million, given the size of individual contracts.

The City must **ensure that the funding for the NYC Benefits program is baselined in FY25 and outyears so all providers are able to continue their essential work.** Now that contracts have been extended, the City must provide clarity on funding levels and end any remaining uncertainty that CBOs and staff have been grappling with, therefore allowing programs to plan ahead for upcoming years with sufficient time and certainty.

Thank you for your time. To follow up, you can contact me at pinhargue@unhny.org.



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**Testimony Submitted by
Chef Gregory Silverman, CEO, West Side Campaign Against Hunger
For the FY25 NYC Budget Hearing**

May 29th, 2024

Thank you to General Welfare Committee Chair Diana Ayala for holding today's budget hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Chef Greg Silverman, CEO of the West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH), an anti-hunger organization that, for 45 years, has been focused on providing access to large quantities of healthy, fresh produce and direct benefits enrollment to New Yorkers in need. Last year alone WSCAH provided support to 80,000 NYC customers, which included the distribution of over 2.2 million pounds of fresh produce - over 50% of all food we give out. Decades ago, WSCAH created the customer choice pantry model in the basement of a church on 86th St and Broadway that has been the gold standard for pantry service. We have since expanded ideas of choice to focus on what our customers demand and deserve...choice of not just apples or bananas but of location of service, delivery models, and time spent securing food.

And this choice is not just an economic win for all, it's a health win for our entire sector. *This year, research conducted via Columbia University Irving Medical Center through Dr. Jennifer Woo Baidal in partnership with WSCAH food distributions was published in Nutrients. Through a longitudinal study of a clinical-community emergency food assistance program during COVID-19, participants experienced improvements in household food security associated with increased frequency of vegetable and fruit consumption. **These findings are the first to support that an improvement in food security is linked to increased frequency of vegetable and fruit consumption, thus supporting the use of food security outcomes in future interventions to reduce diet-related chronic diseases. Investing directly in nutritious food for food pantries can lead to improved well-being for New Yorkers and therefore decrease health costs in the long term.***

In addition to WSCAH's 45 significant years of work, we have also founded The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access. The Roundtable is a dedicated network of frontline direct service emergency food providers in New York City including: The Campaign Against Hunger, Project Hospitality, Part of The Solution, St. John's Bread and Life, Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen, WSCAH, Met Council and NY Common Pantry. This collaboration of organizations pursues opportunities for collective action with the goal of procuring more high-quality and culturally appropriate food at better prices. Last year, The Roundtable distributed 28 million pounds of produce at over 1200 sites across the city. Our efforts include collective bulk purchasing of NY state produce, beans, oats, and more, as well as ongoing price data gathering to make informed

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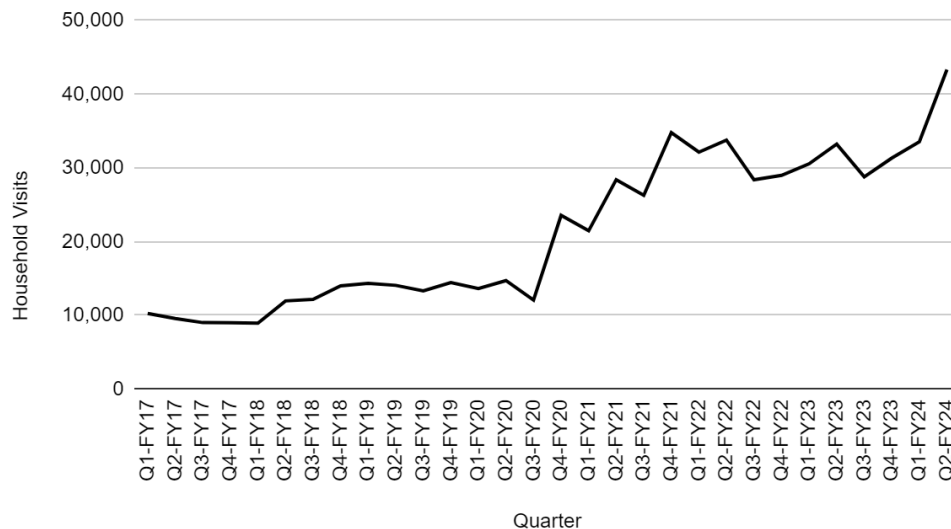


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purchasing decisions to save money and time while improving data transparency. **We are front line food fighters working together to feed our community.** This year, during the Thanksgiving season alone, members of The Roundtable directly purchased over 20,000 turkeys at a cost over 60% cheaper than advertised by the local food bank in NYC. The money we saved allowed us to purchase more food for more families in need across NYC.

But outside of the feel-good story of collaboration there is a sad underbelly of growing need and lessening support. I am not shocked at the growing need, but once again I am dismayed at the lack of support. Our Roundtable members are now seeing higher demand for emergency food than ever before due to sky-rocketing food, fuel, and housing prices. During this past year, the West Side Campaign Against Hunger alone experienced a 42% increase in the demand for food as compared to the previous year and the demand is nearly double what it was prior to the pandemic.

WSCAH - Total Household Visits by Quarter: 86th and Partner Distribution - FY17-Presentation



Based on our price tracking we also saw that from 2021 to 2023 the price of pasta went up 43%, canned tuna up 28% and a dozen eggs up 141%. We are seeing higher prices for food and a massive increase in need.

Current investment in fighting hunger is not just underfunded, it's a slap in the face. I appreciate everyone's efforts, but contrary to popular myths and marketing materials, we do not provide **emergency** feeding in our sector. We are part of a systemic breakdown decades in the making. Charity has never and will never solve hunger, policy will. We need to expand SNAP, raise wages, and build affordable housing and healthcare for all. Our communities are in absolute crisis and the charity sector and irregular handouts of oft ultra processed food will not solve it, but we can help fight it. But front-line food providers cannot do it alone!

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In Fiscal Year 2024 the budget for [Community Food Connection program](#), which was \$57 million, will [drop to \\$25 million](#) in FY 2025, and further decline to \$21 million in FY 2026. Food Pantries work as part of a web of services and support, and when one area is cut, all the community feels the pain. We seek a FY25 City Budget that will ensure all New York City families have access to healthy, affordable food and foster long-term resilience and economic opportunity in the City's food system.

We respectfully request your support for the inclusion of the following budget recommendations in the FY25 New York City Budget:

Ensure All New York City Families Have Access to Healthy, Affordable Food

- **Increase and baseline funding to a total of \$60 Million for the Community Food Connection (CFC), formerly known as the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP).** We are concerned about the mayor's proposed, over 50% cut to the CFC program. New data from the New York Department of Health reported that nearly one in four (24.9%) New York adults experienced food insecurity within the past 12 months. Meanwhile, according to the 2023 New York City True Cost of Living Report, published by United Way of New York City, 50% of working age New Yorkers are struggling to cover their basic needs. Families struggling to make ends meet live in every NYC neighborhood but across family composition, work status, and education, the report finds that people of color are disproportionately likely to lack adequate income. Further, 80% of households below the True Cost of Living had at least one working adult and the presence of children in the household almost doubles the likelihood that a household will have inadequate income. This alarming data aligns with testimonials from food banks and food pantries across the state, the majority of whom observed a major uptick in households served last year.

A moderate increase, as opposed to massive decrease, in funding for the CFC would accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program, rising cost of produce, and continued need, including the continuing influx of asylum seekers and other migrants seeking refuge in New York City. This increase will also help to address the inefficiencies found in using third-party vendors, particularly in the procurement of kosher and halal items.

In addition to increased funding, we also request that HRA work with the Administration and Comptroller's Office to speed up payments to CFC providers, ensuring they have money up front to cover the administrative costs of implementing the program and are not required to obtain reimbursement for program services. Awaiting reimbursement is especially burdensome for new and small emergency food providers that may not have a line of credit or enough cash on hand to cover upfront costs of implementing the CFC program.

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Finally, we urge HRA to engage in an outreach and education campaign to ensure smaller, community-based providers, especially those who have begun operating since the onset of the pandemic, are able to participate in the program, and adequately supported so that they are able to continue serving their communities.

Our communities are hurting and at present we see no ray of light from the public sectors. Let's all work together as one community to support all New Yorkers in need. With support for CFC our communities have a fighting chance for a food secure year ahead.

Please reach out with any questions about these comments as we are happy to provide additional details. Thank you for your consideration.

Chef Greg Silverman, MSc
CEO West Side Campaign Against Hunger
Founder and Director Roundtable NYC
Co-Founder and Board Chair, Alliance for a Hunger Free NY
gsilverman@wscah.org

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Testimony Submitted by

Martina Santos, Board Member of the West Side Campaign Against Hunger

For the General Welfare Hearing on the FY25 NYC Budget

Thank you to General Welfare Committee Chair Diana Ayala for holding today's hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Martina Santos and I live in the Bronx, New York.

Currently, I attend the West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH) food pantry as a customer, volunteer, and board member. I have been visiting WSCAH for over 14 years, where I initially came as a customer because my income was very low, and I couldn't afford to buy food that would take me the whole month. When I first came to WSCAH, I immediately noticed the quality of the food WSCAH distributes to its customers. That day, I went home with a smile, as I brought with me fresh fruits and vegetables, protein, grains, milk, which I was able to choose myself during my visit. The experience of being able to choose food made me feel worthy, as I was able to put aside the stigma of visiting a food pantry.

WSCAH has become a home for me, as almost immediately from my first visit, I became a pantry volunteer.

WSCAH's mission is to alleviate hunger by ensuring that all New Yorkers have dignified access to healthy food selection and support services.

Last year, WSCAH distributed over 4 million pounds of healthy food for its 80,000.

I've had the opportunity to help this work grow.

For example, seven years ago WSCAH had one distribution point and now WSCAH has more than 30 distribution points and is also delivering directly to over 1500 homes. My greatest satisfaction is being able to refer family, neighbors, friends and even strangers to the WSCAH pantry because I know they will find not only a wide variety of fresh and healthy foods, but also empathetic treatment from the WSCAH team.

As a WSCAH volunteer, I have been able to feel the sad reality of hunger and need that exists in our city. I am pleased to be able to help, together with WSCAH, so that the tens of thousands of New Yorkers who annually visit WSCAH, do not go to bed hungry. I have witnessed for more than 14 years how WSCAH's work has become indispensable to many in our community, but unfortunately it is a job that requires a lot of effort and financial support.

The mayor's recently released Preliminary Budget Plan is set to cut [Community Food Connection program](#)(CFC) by over \$30million dollars from \$57 million [to \\$25 million](#) this year. WE can't feed our community with these cuts. Please restore CFC to a level that can help our community.

Our city administration must provide an additional \$35 million in FY 2025 and \$39 million in FY 2026 and in the outyears to restore and strengthen Community Food Connection funding.

Please help us to help our community, restore CFC!!!

Martina Santos
Board Member
West Side Campaign Against Hunger

Sub: Urgent Call to Restore Funding for Nutrition Education and School Meals in NYC Public Schools!

To whom this will concern,

My name is Aderinsola Babawale. I am a Youth food justice intern with East New York Farms in Brooklyn & I'm writing to urge your support to restore funding to educational programs that serve crucial roles in providing nutrition education & school meals for the youth!

Firstly It is imperative that we address the disparity between the overfunded police budget and the insufficient allocation to essential programs like nutrition education and school meals.

As concerned citizens, we cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that while the police budget stands at a staggering 11 billion dollars, funding for vital services like nutrition education and school meals has been slashed, with a significant reduction of 60 million dollars in the past fiscal year alone. This drastic reduction in funding directly impacts the well-being and future prospects of our city's children.

To restore funding to provide NYC public school children with free and healthy school meals, and to increase nutrition and health education in schools, we must address the disproportionate allocation of resources. By investing in the health and education of our youth in the following fiscal year 2025 as it is not only morally imperative but also essential for the long-term prosperity and well-being of our community. That includes education on the food system; composting is a great example to help them get a total educational perspective on nutrition for personal well-being, and how to handle food waste for communal well-being too!

Nutrition education plays a critical role in shaping the dietary habits and health outcomes of our children. By providing comprehensive nutrition education in schools, we can empower our youth to make informed choices about their diet and lead healthier lives. Moreover, access to free and healthy school meals ensures that all children, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have access to nutritious food, which is vital for their physical and cognitive development. Composting efforts in our city are often glossed over and even neglected but when done well they help keep our streets clean and our trees healthy.

However, the current funding cuts threaten to undermine these crucial initiatives, leaving many of our city's children without access to adequate nutrition and education. This not only exacerbates existing inequalities but also perpetuates a cycle of poor health and academic underachievement among vulnerable populations.

As I advocate for the restoration of funding to these essential programs, I will again strongly urge reallocating resources from the bloated nyc police budget to support nutrition education and school meals, we can ensure that every child in our city has the opportunity to thrive.

In conclusion, I urge you to prioritize the well-being and future success of our children by supporting efforts to restore funding to educational programs that promote nutrition education and provide free and healthy school meals. Together, we can build a healthier, more equitable future for all residents of New York City. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Adérinsolá Babawale

Aderinsola@proton.me

Brownsville, Brooklyn 11212

Dear Councilmembers,

Hello ,my name is Arielis Torres and I am a returning intern at the East New York Farms and I am emailing you about the Nutrition Education Funding/School Meals for school lunch is just not doing enough for the students it's trying to feed .Im asking you to try and fix some of the problems surrounding school food and allow it to become more appealing to the K-12 system. School lunch is important because it allows students to enhance their educational experience, reflect their voices, and nourish them into adulthood. In conclusion we really need to fix the problem surrounding school lunch meals and fix it to appeal to kids to eat it . And thank you for allowing me to share.

Sincerely,

Arielis Torres

Bushwick, Brooklyn 11221

Hello, council members,

Good morning or afternoon. Ashley Tejada is my name, and I'm fifteen years old. From Brooklyn farm in East New York, I am a crew leader member. I am required to address the important topic of school lunches and financing for nutrition education in our city today. All of our citizens live in stronger, safer, and healthier communities thanks to these city goals.

Being a person who lives in the city, I have personally seen the difficulties experienced by families who are unable to provide their kids with healthy food. We can ensure that no child goes hungry throughout the school day by increasing funding for free, healthy school lunches. Approximately 1.2 million New Yorkers depend on emergency food assistance annually, indicating that food insecurity is still a major problem in our city, according to the NYC Food Policy Alliance. In addition to being morally right, providing free and nutritious school meals is important to help us children's wellbeing and academic performance. Boost Health and Nutrition Education: As a student, I have witnessed the positive effects that health education and nutrition have on students' general wellbeing. By putting food insecurity health education in schools, we could allow children to make healthier food choices and live longer lives, claims the NYC Food Policy Alliance. Just 25% of NYC public schools currently teach nutrition according to the rules, based on the Food Education Hub. This money can be prioritized in order to close the gap and make sure every student has access to complete nutrition learning.

There was a student in my class just last year who consistently showed up to school hungry. It was sad to watch the child struggle both mentally and emotionally because of hunger, even with the best of intentions to provide snacks and support. Such suffering shouldn't have to be faced by any teenager, especially in a city with our level of luxury. We can stop situations like these from happening and make sure that every child has the chance to succeed by funding free, healthy school meals as well as food learning.

I ask for the council to provide money for nutritious, free school lunches and increased nutrition instruction in schools as soon as possible. The future and well-being of children are dependent on it. Together, let's make sure that every child in NYC has access to the education and resources they require for success. I appreciate all of your time and thought.

Sincerely,
Ashley Tejada
East New York, Brooklyn 11207

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Bradley Thomas. I'm a 17 years old Youth Food Justice Network Organizing Intern a part of the administration East New York Farms which is a project of the United Community Center in partnership with local residents. My mission as a youth justice network organizing intern is to work towards achieving food justice and equity in my community. I like to go about that by raising awareness about food insecurity, advocating for policy changes, and collaborating with local organizations to create sustainable solutions. Food assistance programs like SNAP, EBT, and WIC and others play a crucial role in addressing the rising cost of food and supporting vulnerable populations in NYC. With the ever-increasing prices of groceries many individuals and families struggle to afford nutritious meals. By increasing funding for these programs, the government can ensure that everyone has access to essential food resources, promoting food security, and reducing food insecurity rates in the city.

Moreover, as NYC continues to welcome incoming migrants and experience population growth it becomes even more important to solidify and meet the needs of existing residents of NYC in addition to meeting the new needs of the incoming migrant's. Many migrants and new residents may face challenges in finding stable employment and housing, making it difficult for them to afford food. By investing in food assistance programs, the government can provide a safety net for these individuals, helping them meet their basic nutritional needs while they work towards establishing themselves in the city.

In addition to direct food assistance, the government should also focus on strengthening community food connections. By fostering collaborations between local organizations, businesses, and community members, we can create a more sustainable and supportive food system. This can be achieved through initiatives such as community gardens, farmers market, and food cooperatives, which not only increase access to fresh and affordable produce, but also promote community engagement and empowerment.

By increasing funding for food assistance programs and community food connections, the government can address both the immediate and long-term challenges related to food access and affordability in NYC. These investments not only approve the overall well-being of individuals and families, but also contribute to the social fabric of the city by fostering a sense of togetherness and support within communities. It's time to prioritize the needs of our most Vulnerable populations, and ensure that no one in NYC goes hungry.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns, it means a lot that you're willing to hear the perspectives of young people like myself. Your attentiveness and support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Bradley Thomas
East New York, Brooklyn 11207

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Dontez Shack and I'm a junior staff working for East New York Farms. I'm writing this because Food assistance and benefits access can make a huge difference in people's lives. Food assistance and benefits access are crucial in providing support to individuals and families facing financial hardships. These programs help ensure that nobody has to worry about going hungry and can focus on other important aspects of their lives.

The policy I am asking for surrounding food assistance and benefit access is increasing funding for food assistance programs to meet the growing demand. Expand outreach efforts to ensure that eligible individuals are aware of the available resources. EBT had cut off a lot of people who needed food assistance without food assistance programs, they struggle to buy the bare minimum food that would last only a week. My family and I struggle to make it through without food assistance just because the government thinks we make a-lot of money but doesn't know where that money goes.

This needs to be fixed fast because without food assistance and benefit access we all will struggle. We need this asap because it helps out a-lot of people. It gives people a chance to save and actually enjoy their-self without having to pick up extra shifts just to be able to afford the bare minimum. We need the increase of funding for food assistance and benefit access.

Sincerely,

Dontez Shack

East New York, Brooklyn 11208

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Jemel Thomas, and I am a 19 year old college student that works with a great organization called East New York Farms. Throughout my time working as a farmer with plenty of enlightened workmates & supervisors, i've learned something very interesting. There are many young people who are never taught how to properly provide their bodies with nourishment. My goal in writing this message is to start action within our schools, to teach the youth about the importance of proper nutrition.

I've already graduated from highschool, and I've had the breakfast, lunch, and afterschool meals that a school could provide. Throughout my time as a middle school and high school student, I've never once taken a second thought towards what goes into my stomach. Truth is, schools don't emphasize the importance of a well balanced diet. My only somewhat like nutrition classes, health class and gym education class, has failed me. Sure, sex-ed and lifting up weights we're cool, but why after sitting in these classes do I still not know that I need proper nutrition to fuel my brain and body after they end.

Looking at the school meal program for schools as a whole is really astounding since even students who have families struggling financially won't be left on an empty stomach. The real disturbing issue reveals itself when we look closer as to what is really on every student's plates. Nasty, unhealthy, and processed foods are the bulk of what makes up the perfect U.S. school lunch. "A 2009 investigation by USA Today found that meat served in U.S. schools wouldn't meet the quality or safety standards of fast-food restaurants" (foodrevolution.org).

Seeing information like this clearly on the internet, hearing the remarks of students complaining about the food, and having knowledge of how plenty of students each day feel drained and lack energy exposes the true ignorance of schools' food and nutrition programs.

We must focus on the roots of our students' very being, and that's what they use as fuel to get them through the day. Making the change in what these young learners eat, and teaching them what a proper diet looks like, will surely make them happier, healthier, and even more creative with what they choose as their next meal. We should ask the students what they like and dislike about the food that their schools offer them, aswell as start more nutrition based classes for them. I believe starting like this will make a big difference very quickly, and if I was to speak for many, I would say that I would want my child to go to school, knowing that he will be fed a nutritious meal.

Sincerely,
Jemel Thomas
Brownsville, Brooklyn 11212

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Mark Felter and I'm 17 years old. The organization that I work for is East New York Farms where I am a 4th year returning intern who works in the compost position. I live in east New York on New Lots Avenue and I'm writing this to whoever may be concerned about the topic of Food Assistance and Benefits Access in New York city. My goal for writing this is to spread awareness of the need of food assistance in New York and in other parts of the world. Finding a way to increase Food Assistance and Benefits Access in the U.S and around the world would help people be healthier and more secure in their food situation.

My goals for raising awareness for Food Assistance and Benefits Access would be to improve people's food situations, the type of food that is accessible to them, and the price of the food. And for those who are homeless like in NYC where the homeless population is high we could find a way for them to have access to get clean, healthy and accessible food and water so that they too can be healthy. Because everyone deserves to be healthy and have good food. The homeless population in the state of New York is 37.70% and that number could be even higher because there's people who don't stay in shelters and the number/ percentage could be higher than 37.70%. The topic of Food Assistance and Benefits Access is really important to me because especially in New York City where most of the black and brown community resides there aren't a lot of healthy food options to choose from and if there is then it isn't very convenient to get to.

Hopefully something can get done soon about this issue of Food Assistance and Benefits Access because many people are suffering from this. And thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about this topic, councilmember.

Sincerely,
Mark Felter
East New York, Brooklyn 11207

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Qyli Banks and I am a farmers market returning intern at east new york farms. I currently live in East New York and I'm writing about school meals because I feel like everyone should have access to good and healthy food at school . My policy that I feel like needs to be put in place is that all students should have access to evidence-based nutrition education programs that promote healthy eating habits and that funding should be provided for the implementation of breakfast and lunch programs that meet or exceed standards set by federal regulation .

One of the main reasons why nutrition education and school meals need more funding is the rise in childhood obesity rates. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, childhood obesity has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents in the past 30 years. This alarming trend is largely attributed to poor nutrition and unhealthy eating habits, which can be addressed through proper nutrition education and access to nutritious meals in schools. By providing children with the necessary knowledge and resources to make healthy food choices, we can help combat the growing epidemic of childhood obesity.

In conclusion, nutrition education and school meals are essential components of a child's education that deserve more funding. By investing in these programs, we can help combat childhood obesity, improve academic performance, and empower students to make healthy choices. It is imperative that schools prioritize the health and well-being of students by providing the necessary resources to support nutrition education and school meals. Only then can we ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive and succeed in school and beyond.

Sincerely,
Qyli Banks
East New York, Brooklyn

Dear Council member Chris Banks,

My name is Taveya Leon I'm 18 years old and I work for an organization called East New York Farms and I live in East New York.

I am here today to Testify about the lack of food assistance and benefits access when it comes to EBT and people that have to figure out how they will pay for their needed medications. Also this issue affects me and the people in my community. I have a family member that has 3 kids and stopped working for a while but when she was working she was making enough to give her and her kids a living with the small amount of food stamps that was given for the month. She was trying her best to make sure they had their everyday needs but also a meal to eat so she wanted to see if she could get more assistance to get food but they told her no due to the type of income she was making .This left her with no choice but to reach out to people close to her such as my mom and other Family members to help get food. I feel the need to testify because I see a lot of people I know that's within my community that are struggling to feed their families because the government is shortening their benefits or taking it from the people that really need it.

The things I feel we can do is take more action like protest, create more Food pantries and raise money to help the people in need so it's enough money to give to the people that need more in benefits. This would be a better option instead of it going towards the people that are coming from different countries. We have to help the people here first or find a way to help everyone who needs it. We can have council members reach out to farms to Help get affordable food on the streets to hand out to these communities.

Thank you Mr. Banks and committee for hearing my testimony and I hope that my statement can be helpful and ways to benefit the community and come to a common solution.

Sincerely,
Taveya Leon
East New York, Brooklyn

Dear Chairwoman Fudge, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Committee

- [] Hello my name is Tyjahnea Grier I'm 18 years old. I am currently residing in East New York and I am a concerned New York resident.

- [] I came in-front of you all today to testify how a lack of Food assistance and Benefit access to the people who need it is making it difficult for some families to live including my own. I hope that after this testimony you can think about all the low income families who are suffering and we can come to a resolution .

- [] A time this issue has affected me was when my mom food stamps got cut recently out of nowhere .This made it really hard for us to afford the healthier groceries we need due to us being a low income household and having one source of income .Healthier food options are more expensive so with our stamps being cut and food being more this made us have to buy options that aren't good for our bodies .For example, Food with more sodium,sugars or calories in it which is not good for black families because we are more vulnerable to get things such as diabetes Or high blood pressure.

- [] This situation made me look at things differently and realize it's not fair to us low income families to have to struggle to get healthier options .

- [] I wanted to share this with you all today just to give you a glimpse of what the low income families have to go through wondering where their next meal will come from .Some of these families are single moms or dads and have to figure it out for their children .

- [] This situation could have been avoided if they let families know why they cut there stamps or how they can fix it .Before they just randomly leave families to struggle and figure it out without any notice .

- [] There are ways we can solve this problem such as opening more farmers markets with healthier produce options at a lower cost .Such as east New York Farms but in all communities so everyone can have access no matter your ethnicity. They can even have families submit letters about their families living conditions so they can understand why this means so much to them or how it is helping keep their families alive .

- [] Thank you Chairwoman Fudge, Ranking Member Johnson for hearing my testimony Today. Your consideration of this matter and my solutions is very much appreciated hope you all have a nice day .

Sincerely,

Tyjahnea Grier

East New York, Brooklyn

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DSS First Deputy Commissioner Jill Berry

Address: _____

I represent: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Greg Silverman

Address: 263 W. 86th NY NY 10013

I represent: The Roundtable NYC

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph Rosenberg

Address: 191 Jerusalem St.

I represent: Catholic Community Relations Council

Address: _____

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

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

(2)

Appearance Card

[]

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jessica Chait

Address: Met Council on Jewish Poverty

I represent: Director - Food Programs

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

(3)

Appearance Card

[]

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lakisha Morris

Address: 1011 1st Ave

I represent: Catholic Charities - Archdiocese of NY

Address: Director of Operations

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

(4)

Appearance Card

[]

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Smith

Address: 191 Jerusalem St

I represent: Catholic Charities - Brooklyn & Queens

Address: Food Resource Manager



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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

5

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Daryl Wright
Address: Met Council on Jewish Poverty
I represent: Food Policy Fellow
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Barbara Hughes
Address: _____
I represent: Project Renewal
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Richard Ralph
Address: _____
I represent: Project Renewal
Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Daryl Wright

Address: _____

I represent: Met Council

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joel Berg

Address: _____ Brook 17W

I represent: Hungai Flea America

Address: 50 Blvd, NY, N

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 57

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Graham Horn

Address: 100 Pearl St., 17th Floor NY NY 10004

I represent: New York Legal Assistance Group

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Laksha Morris

Address: 1011 First Avenue

I represent: Catholic Charities Archdiocese of NY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nazreen Rahman

Address: 55 Water Street, New York, NY 10041

I represent: EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care

Address: 55 Water Street, New York, NY 10041

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CHRISTINA HANSON

Address: 2759 WEBSTER AVE BRONX, NY 10458

I represent: PART OF THE SOLUTION (POTS)

Address: 2759 WEBSTER AVE BRONX, NY 10458

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Evelyn Garcia

Address: 331 E. 70th

I represent: Lenox Hill Neighborhood House

Address: 331 E. 70th NY, NY 10021

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sophie Martin

Address: _____

I represent: Housing Solutions of New York

Address: 1802 Crotona Avenue Bronx, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alex Hughes

Address: [Redacted] Staten Island, NY 10301

I represent: Project Hospitality, myself

Address: 100 Park Ave, SF, NY 10302

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/24

Name: Stephen Grimaldi (PLEASE PRINT) NY Common Prof.

Address: _____

I represent: NY Common Prof.

Address: 8 East 109th St.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/24

Name: NICK BUSS (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: Food Bank For NYC

Address: 39 B'way 10th Fl. 10006

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/24

Name: Camila Gomez (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: God's Love We Deliver

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: 02/29/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Daryl Wright

Address: _____

I represent: Met Council

Address: One State St Plaza

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeanette Estima

Address: _____

I represent: Citymeals

Address: 355 Lexington Ave NYC

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: 5/29/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARTINA SANTOS

Address: _____

I represent: WDCAT

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/22/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rachel Sabella

Address: No Kid Hungry

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

29

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PAVA INHARVE

Address: _____

I represent: UNITED NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ariel Savransky

Address: _____

I represent: UJA-Federation of NY

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ruth Moor

Address: [REDACTED] Prospect Pl

I represent: _____

Address: _____



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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lacey Tauber

Address: _____

I represent: Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso

Address: _____



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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

30

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shegan Brown

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: Jamaica NY 11436

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

31

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 5/29/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Susana Camarena

Address: 262 Bowery

I represent: The Taicombi Foundation

Address: _____

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