

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

-----X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

-----X

May 21, 2012
Start: 10:37 a.m.
Recess: 12:25 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway
Committee Room, 14th Floor

B E F O R E:
MARIA DEL CARMEN ARROYO
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Daniel R. Garodnick
Inez E. Dickens
Peter F. Vallone, Jr.
Julissa Ferreras
James G. Van Bramer
Mathieu Eugene
Gale A. Brewer

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

Lauren Shields
New York Organ Donor Network

James Pardes
Vice President of Marketing and Communications
New York Organ Donor Network

Sara Jacobs
Assemblyman Felix Ortiz

Ted Lawson
President and Executive Director
Save Lives Now New York Foundation

Colleen Second

Triada Stampas
Senior Director of Government Relations
Food Bank for New York City

Qiana Mickie
New York City Food and Farm Bill Working Group
2

Sandra Jean-Louis
Director of Access to Health and Benefits
Public Health Solutions

Margaret Brown
Legal fellow
Natural Resources Defense Council

Joel Berg
Executive Director
New York City Coalition Against Hunger

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

1
2 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Good morning,
3 everyone. Thank you for all being here on this
4 bright and beautiful Monday, wet and soggy
5 morning. And my apologies for my delay, but
6 police activity on the FDR just wouldn't have me
7 get here on time.

8 Good morning, my name is Maria
9 Carmen Arroyo and I am the Chair of the Health
10 Committee. Today the Committee will be conducting
11 a hearing on Proposed Resolution 1196-A, calling
12 upon the New York State Legislature to pass and
13 the Governor to sign Lauren's Law. In the Senate,
14 is the bill number S.7103 and in the Assembly,
15 A.10039, legislation that would require mandatory
16 registration or declination of registration in
17 organ donor registry.

18 We previously held a hearing on
19 organ donation in October of 2011. At this
20 hearing, we heard firsthand from individuals who
21 were affected by life saving organ donations and
22 their families. Today we will be discussing a
23 specific proposal which would result in greater--
24 in what we believe would be a greater number of
25 organ donors in the state of New York.

1
2 Nationally, 18 people die each day
3 awaiting a life saving organ transplant. In New
4 York state, more than 1,500 people received
5 donated kidneys, livers, and hearts for transplant
6 each year. However, more than 8,000 New Yorkers
7 find themselves waiting for a transplant.

8 Clearly, our state is in need of more donors, yet
9 New York has among the lowest organ donation rate
10 in the country. Organ donation can benefit up to
11 8 lives and donating tissue can benefit about 12.
12 In New York state, one can enroll as an organ,
13 tissue, or eye donor through the Donate Life
14 registry. Most people register when applying for
15 or renewing their driver's license or non-driver's
16 identification card. And this is at the heart of
17 what our proposal is and what we will be
18 discussing today.

19 The resolution calls upon the state
20 to pass and the Governor to sign Lauren's Law.
21 Under Lauren's Law, an individual applying for or
22 renewing their license would have to respond to
23 whether they want to enroll as an organ donor.
24 They would check a box stating either yes or not
25 at this time. Currently, this is not a mandatory

1
2 answered question and a applicant can bypass it
3 without even considering whether or not they would
4 want to think about being an organ donor. They
5 would check the box stating yes or not at this
6 time, making this question mandatory will go a
7 long way in increasing the number of donors we
8 have in New York state. Other states have
9 significantly higher donor rates--that have
10 significantly higher donor rates have enacted
11 versions of Lauren's Law.

12 Recently, there has been some
13 exciting news about organ donation. First, during
14 Organ Donation Month in April, the state
15 Department of Motor Vehicles announced that
16 individuals can now register as an organ donor
17 completely online. Additionally, a request for
18 proposal was issued to give control of the Donate
19 Life registry to a private vendor, similar to the
20 approach taken by other states. Additionally,
21 Facebook recently teamed up with Donate Life
22 America, and in an effort to increase awareness
23 and have more people sign up as donors, users can
24 now display their organ donation status on their
25 homepage. Facebook also directs users to their

1
2 state's organ donation site. These exciting
3 developments can potentially result in life saves-
4 -in saving lives.

5 Today we will hear from advocacy
6 organizations, medical professionals, and other
7 concerned members of the community about Lauren's
8 Law. I want to thank the staff for their hard
9 work--Lacey Clarke to my right, our Committee
10 Counsel; Joe Mancino, our Policy Analyst who is
11 hibernating--oh, he's graduating from law school
12 today. We've been waiting for that for a while
13 now. We congratulate Joe for his hard work and
14 his dedication to the Committee and to his
15 studies. And Pamela Corbett, who is preparing for
16 our budget briefing at some point this afternoon.

17 I want to thank my colleagues who
18 have joined us: Council Member Dan Garodnick, who
19 is especially interested in this issue, Council
20 Member Inez Dickens, and I think I saw Peter
21 Vallone around behind me. Thank you for being
22 here.

23 We will now hear from the first
24 panel and, please, if you are here to testify and
25 you haven't filled out this form, we will not know

1
2 you're here, and we want to hear from you, so
3 please make sure the sergeant receives one of
4 these little slips. Okay. Okay. I'm trying to
5 see whether we are going to put you guys in two
6 panels or one, but since we have a little bit of
7 time, I'm going to split it up in two. I'm going
8 to ask Lauren Shields, she here? Hi, Lauren. In
9 case you weren't paying attention, Lauren's Law,
10 Lauren Shields. Lauren, are you accompanied by
11 anyone who's going to testify this morning? No,
12 it's just you? We're going to give her the podium
13 all to herself, okay. James Padres, Pardes, New
14 York Organ Donor Network. Lauren, nice to see you
15 again. You see what happens when you work hard on
16 something? Good. Okay. I think you guys have
17 done this before, but in case you don't remember,
18 you need to identify yourself for the record,
19 speak into the mic so the sergeant can pick up the
20 recording or they then get snippy and they yell at
21 us. And you may begin when you're ready.

22 LAUREN SHIELDS: My name is Lauren
23 Shields and I am 12 years old and I am an organ
24 transplant survivor.

25 Three years ago, I had a life

1
2 saving heart transplant. My condition came out of
3 nowhere, catching us all by surprise when I
4 suddenly went into heart failure. A simple virus
5 had attacked my heart. I remember when I was told
6 that I would need a transplant--I wasn't really
7 sure what that meant, but I knew that I was very
8 sick and getting worse. I remember at one point,
9 saying to mommy that I hoped my new heart would
10 come soon because I didn't think that the old one
11 was going to be able to wait.

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

19 It has not been an easy journey but
20 I am so grateful that I am alive. Make no mistake
21 about it, the reason that I am here is not just
22 because of my story, I am here because of 13-year
23 old Linda, who loves school and hates missing it,
24 but is absent often because she needs a new
25 kidney; for 33-year old Jason who lives in

1
2 Brooklyn and is a father in need of a kidney; and
3 for 8-year old Noah who died waiting for a
4 transplant in a New York City hospital. We live
5 in New York, the greatest state in the entire
6 world and I know we can do better.

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

14 I am visiting with you today to ask
15 for your support on saving lives. I know that
16 together we can make a difference. I spent a good
17 part of last year lobbying in the New York State
18 Senate in order to pass a bill called Lauren's Law
19 which would make the donor question on the DMV
20 form mandatory to answer. The law was named after
21 me, but this bill is for all of us. It's for
22 those that gave, those that received, and for the
23 thousands that still wait. Today you have an
24 opportunity to take the important steps necessary
25 to help the thousands of New Yorkers that are

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

suffering just like I was.

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

JAMES PARDES: Hi, James Pardes with the New York Organ Donor Network.

There is a severe shortage of organs in New York. As a result, every 15 hours, an individual in New York dies waiting for an organ transplant. It doesn't have to be this way. The New York Organ Donor Network is working to ensure that in the future it is not this way.

Good morning, as Vice President of Marketing and Communications for the New York Organ Donor Network, I am committed to making sure that that future comes sooner, rather than later. I'm passionate about this cause and as the brother of a liver recipient, I have a deep appreciation for the miracle of donation.

The New York Organ Donor Network is a federally designated organ procurement organization committed to saving and improving lives by facilitating organ, eye, and tissue donation. Our 174 employees cover a federally

1
2 designated service area that includes 13 million
3 people across the five boroughs of New York City,
4 Long Island, and five counties north of the city,
5 including Rockland, Westchester, Putnam, Orange,
6 and Dutchess.

7 The shortage of organs in New York
8 is not due to the fact that New Yorkers are
9 against organ donation. To the contrary, a 2010
10 study revealed that 83% of New Yorkers support
11 organ donation, yet just 18% of New Yorkers are
12 registered to become organ donors. The national
13 average is 43%.

14 The numbers equate to a clear
15 challenge. The challenge is not to convince New
16 Yorkers that organ donation is good, instead, our
17 challenge is to move New Yorkers to take action.
18 To that end, the New York Organ Donor Network is
19 focused on two important levers: Awareness and
20 access.

21 To drive and maintain awareness, we
22 launched a more aggressive multimedia campaign in
23 2011 that continues today. We are leveraging
24 vehicles including TV, radio, out of home, social
25 media, earned media, and community activity to

1
2 maintain positive sentiment, create urgency, and
3 ultimately trigger registration.

4 But awareness without effective
5 access to registration on the Donate Life registry
6 won't amount to much. Organ donation is not a
7 subject that people want to engage in, let alone
8 proactively seek out. The primary reason for
9 this: When you consider organ donation, you are
10 facing your own mortality. As such, despite the
11 positive sentiment alluded to earlier, we can't
12 wait for New Yorkers to come to us to register, we
13 have to bring the opportunity to register to
14 become an organ donor to New Yorkers.

15 The Department of Motor Vehicles is
16 the dominant portal for enrollment into the donor
17 registry. We can make this important access point
18 work much harder for us by passing Lauren's Law.

19 Today, those obtaining or renewing
20 their New York State's driver's license or non-
21 driver's I.D. have the option to address or not
22 address the organ donation registration question.
23 Lauren's Law would require a response to the organ
24 donation question with either a yes or not at this
25 time. This is precisely what is needed. That is,

1
2 Lauren's Law in effect brings the opportunity to
3 register to become an organ donor to New Yorkers.
4 The result, we believe, will be that those who
5 think positively about organ donation but who
6 would otherwise choose not to interact with the
7 topic for the reasons discussed previously will
8 consider it and, in many cases, will enroll. The
9 impact, therefore, of Lauren's Law would be that
10 more New Yorkers enroll as organ donors and
11 ultimately more lives will be saved.

12 Like any other day in New York, as
13 this day passes, so too will another fellow New
14 Yorker on the waiting list. We can't accept this.
15 With the passage of Lauren's Law, New York will
16 take an important step to ensuring that tomorrow
17 is a better day than today, that tomorrow is a day
18 which no one dies waiting for an organ.

19 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you both
20 for your testimony--I'm sorry, my ear is not
21 feeling well and I'm not sure if this is on, I
22 can't hear it.

23 [Off mic]

24 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: It is, okay.
25 Lauren, thank you so much, it's so nice to see you

1
2 here talking to us again on this thing--this
3 mission that you have laid out for yourself. At
4 your age, it is phenomenal to see such a young New
5 Yorker before us advocating on something that's so
6 important. Many adults should take a page from
7 your book.

8 We have questions. Council Member
9 Vallone followed by Council Member Garodnick. And
10 we've been joined by Council Member Julissa
11 Ferreras and Council Member Van Bramer.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Thank you,
13 Madam Chair. Lauren, I walked in, didn't look up,
14 sat down, going from hearing to hearing, press
15 conference, things in my district, sat down, and
16 then I heard your voice and, of course, you have
17 to look up and say, you know, wow. And I just
18 want you to--that means something because we see
19 advocates--I mean he did a great job, but he's not
20 you, you know? We see advocates like him every
21 day and, you know, frankly, they get a little
22 boring, but then you come in, you come in and you
23 make a difference. So you just keep doing what
24 you're doing because it really affects everybody
25 who sees you. And I just want to thank you for

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

everything.

I have to leave, unfortunately, at 11 o'clock, there's a press conference to get the Vallone Scholarship back which will hopefully be there when you go to college, so I have to leave for that. But I just wanted to tell you to keep doing what you're doing.

And one quick question to you, I guess. How many other states do have laws like this?

JAMES PARDES: That's a good question. I know for certain that California implemented this law fairly recently. There are others that I believe may have similar but slightly different iterations of this law.

COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: That would have been--it's always good when New York gets on board and helps lead the way.

Lauren, you mind if I Facebook a picture of you testifying, is that okay? All right, good.

All right, thank you, Madam Chair, for having this hearing.

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Keep up
3 the good work.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: We've been
5 joined by Council Member Mathieu Eugene and
6 Council Member Gale Brewer.

7 Council Member Garodnick.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Thank
9 you, Madam Chair. This is working too, right? My
10 ears are working okay today, but I can't tell
11 either.

12 I wanted to just pose one question
13 and I think you may have answered it in your
14 testimony and this is to either of you. The
15 people who do not decide one way or the other
16 today on whether or not to be an organ donor on
17 those official forms, what do you think is usually
18 at play there and how do you think this will
19 actually impact? And I realize that's probably a
20 very softball question, but I want to just make
21 sure we point that out clearly.

22 JAMES PARDES: Want me to do it?
23 Have to defer to the boss here.

24 I think for those who choose not at
25 this time if Lauren's Law is implemented,

1
2 hopefully, you know, it's our hope that those
3 folks will at least give the idea some
4 consideration. And if they're not comfortable
5 providing that answer then and there at the DMV,
6 which is why they're checking not at this time,
7 they'll go at home and at the appropriate time,
8 they'll engage in the subject. Again, it's
9 important, I think, to realize that organ donation
10 is a subject that most of us, if not all of us,
11 even those who work in this industry, if you can
12 call it an industry, are uncomfortable dealing
13 with because you're essentially dealing with your
14 own mortality, so you have to tackle the subject
15 when you're comfortable with it. So I'm hopeful,
16 we're hopeful as a community, that those people
17 who choose not at this time will, at a time when
18 they're ready, explore the subject in greater
19 detail, whether they do that online or through
20 other means, they discuss it with their families
21 and come to the right decision for them, and
22 that's what's important.

23 And it's important to note that
24 this is not forcing a decision, this is just
25 forcing consideration and that's what's important

1

2 with this subject because, again, we'd all rather
3 not consider it really, it's not something we want
4 to think about. So we just want to get people to
5 think about it, consider it, and when they're
6 ready, to come back and either say yes, and if
7 they say not at this time, then that's noted as
8 well.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: I think
10 that's exactly right and I will admit myself to
11 being squeamish about the topic, I am a donor, but
12 it's a hard issue to confront and I think that we
13 have to be open about that and candid about that
14 and make sure that our friends and family or
15 members are taking the time to think through the
16 importance of this issue. It's not one--

17 JAMES PARDES: Right.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: --that
19 you can just--you shouldn't be able to just get
20 away with being uncomfortable about it--

21 JAMES PARDES: Right.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: --it's
23 one which deserves a decision. So I am very
24 hopeful that we will see some success in Albany.

25 And, Lauren, I just want to tell

1
2 you again, when I met you the other day, I thought
3 you were inspiring standing up there at that press
4 conference and telling everybody your story, and,
5 again, as terrific and articulate as ever, we are
6 all so impressed with you and look forward to many
7 years of advocacy on this and other issues from
8 you. And so thank you for being here again.

9 LAUREN SHIELDS: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Council Member
11 Ferreras, followed by Council Member Dickens.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Good
13 morning, and of course, ditto on everything,
14 Lauren. I also walked in when you were speaking
15 and I kind of was upset that I wasn't here from
16 the very beginning. So I'm very proud to have a
17 young lady speaking on this topic because I think
18 it's important, especially as we--our life
19 expectancies are growing and so is yours because
20 you're going to be here for a long time and we're
21 hoping that this helps you learn how to advocate
22 even for other things, right, as you move forward.

23 I have a question in reference to,
24 you know, when I registered to become a donor, it
25 was when I was renewing my license like everyone

1
2 else and I kind of had to look for the question
3 'cause I went in already knowing that I wanted to
4 make sure I renewed again. So if someone
5 registers or renews their license, do they have to
6 do it every time? Do you have to check off the
7 question every time or is that just permanent the
8 first time you do it?

9 JAMES PARDES: As Lauren's Law
10 stands today, you're not required to register each
11 time that you renew your license. Once you're on
12 the registry, unless you contact the Department of
13 Health to take yourself off, you've consented to
14 donation.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Okay.
16 And then my other question is, I represent a very
17 large immigrant community, many of which do not
18 have access to getting a driver's license, often
19 fearful of getting an I.D., but would probably
20 want to be able to donate if they were in the
21 situation. Can you just speak for the record what
22 the steps are for those people that want to become
23 donors but are not really in--really don't have a
24 moment to interact with DMV?

25 JAMES PARDES: Well for those

1
2 folks, and that's something that the New York
3 Organ Donor Network working--we're working very
4 hard on improving and that is access. We think
5 that it's a challenge for folks that the only time
6 they really interact with the subject is every
7 eight years when they renew license. So
8 increasing access for all is an important step.

9 For those who don't go to the DMV,
10 they have the opportunity to go online to the
11 Department of Health's website and print out a
12 form and fill that form out and send it in. And,
13 no, a driver's license is not required to send
14 that form in.

15 Additionally, at the New York Organ
16 Donor Network, we're heavily involved in community
17 activity and so--and thanks to volunteers like
18 Lauren and many others and other organizations
19 that are out there promoting this cause, there are
20 many events that are held to support organ
21 donation and at those events, people have the
22 opportunity to register. So community events,
23 online, and then of course, folks can contact the
24 New York Organ Donor Network directly, but most
25 likely, I would imagine that folks would either

1

2 come across the opportunity to register through
3 community activity or through online. There's
4 also, obviously, the--well not obviously, but the
5 opportunity to register when you register to vote
6 as well.

7

COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Okay.

8 And so if we have community events and we want to
9 invite your organization to participate with us,
10 this could also help, especially in the immigrant
11 communities and communities of color where the
12 donor conversation is--if it's tough in other
13 communities, is really tough in ours--

14

JAMES PARDES: Yeah.

15

COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: --because
16 we really don't understand the program oftentimes.

17

JAMES PARDES: Yeah, absolutely.

18

19 We welcome all invitations. We do our best to
20 staff those opportunities with either staff from
21 the New York Organ Donor Network or volunteers
22 like Lauren and we also try to be sensitive to the
23 different communities and have representatives of
24 those communities who can speak to some of the
25 challenges and concerns of a specific community.
But I will say there's great opportunity out

1

2 there. Just as an example, we have data that
3 suggests that the Latino community really embraces
4 donation perhaps more than any other community.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Right.

6 JAMES PARDES: But the Latino
7 community, even though we have information that
8 suggests that they embrace it, they are not taking
9 the step to register, so we want to tap into that
10 positive sentiment, we know it's out there. And
11 then from many other communities and even within
12 the Latino community or any community, there are
13 myths out there and we want to spend the time with
14 the community to debunk those myths and make sure
15 that people understand that organ donation is a
16 good thing and that ultimately, when you donate,
17 you're saving up to eight lives and improving up
18 to 50 more, and that's a message we want to share
19 with every community we can, so...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FERRERAS: Thank you
21 very much, and I think what you said is very true.
22 Access is probably our biggest issue, so I look
23 forward to talking with you. Thank you, Madam
24 Chair. Thank you.

25 JAMES PARDES: Thank you.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you,
3 Madam Chair, and good morning. And, Lauren, thank
4 you so much for being so courageous, articulate,
5 and willing to share your story so that the
6 nation, not just New York City and New York state,
7 but the nation can learn from you.

8 I must admit that I was willing to
9 donate my eyes, but I too had a fear and I guess,
10 as James said, a fear of my own mortality because
11 I was fearful about my organs. And because of my
12 lack of knowledge and understanding, I never did
13 sign up for organ donation. And with this
14 hearing, it's an education for me personally, and
15 as well as the city, so I thank you, Lauren, for
16 your courage in doing so.

17 And I agree with my colleague, in
18 Black communities particularly, and Latino
19 communities, it was discouraged in many years in
20 the past for donation from people of color for
21 fear of AIDS, for fear of other diseases that we
22 either had or purportedly had or fear that we had
23 because, oftentimes and most times, it was fear
24 and not actuality in that the African-American and
25 the Latino community suffered with these diseases,

1
2 but due to racism, we were accused of having these
3 diseases. And so now with the education and the
4 understanding and the tolerance, hopefully, that
5 this will alleviate that type of fear in other
6 ethnicities so that it will be encouraged.

7 I have a lot of events in my
8 district, which is central Harlem, the Upper West
9 Side, and frequently we don't have organ donation
10 education. We may have health fairs and organ
11 donation is not a part of those health fairs and
12 so we don't even think about it in our
13 communities, and yet we suffer with it just like
14 everybody else and we could benefit from being
15 registered. So I encourage you to do outreach to
16 the Council Members so that when we do sponsor
17 these events, that we will think to encourage and
18 have you to come out into our communities so that
19 we can learn, so that our population can learn and
20 have a better understanding and alleviate the fear
21 that we so often have.

22 So I just say thank you, James, for
23 your advocacy. Lauren, you're just a phenomenal
24 young person. I imagine that if I should live so
25 long, that--if I live just half as long as I know

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

you will live, that I will see you sitting on this side--

FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: --instead of just advocating. So thank you.

JAMES PARDES: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Lauren for the City Council, that sounds good. Thank you, Council Members.

On the partnership with Facebook, do you know if there--is it too soon to tell whether it's had a positive impact on individuals thinking about registering for as an organ donor or not?

JAMES PARDES: Well initially we did see a really nice spike in registration throughout the country.

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Good.

JAMES PARDES: So there was a tangible result, not just in elevating awareness and changing perception, but people were actually taking the step and registering at a much more aggressive rate than was typical. But what's also typical is when you have a media event, it comes

1
2 and it goes, it has a short-term effect. So now
3 that that blip has kind of come and gone, it's
4 incumbent upon the New York Organ Donor Network
5 and others in the community to figure out how we
6 can get the Facebook profile to work harder for
7 us. The fact of the matter is, on the Facebook
8 profile, it's two pages deep, right, before you
9 can actually see that somebody is an organ donor,
10 so what I've challenged myself to do and my team
11 to do is figure out how do we bring that forward
12 so that when we're interacting with one another on
13 Facebook, that it's very evident that you are an
14 organ donor, therefore, when your friends and
15 family see it, hopefully it reminds them and
16 triggers something in them to at least think about
17 it and hopefully take action.

18 So, again, the short answer is,
19 yes, there was an impact, but we need to do more
20 with it. And the one thing I'll add also, I think
21 it's important because I think you hate to think
22 this way, but it's necessary, it actually took our
23 cause, the organ donation cause, and as I've said
24 in our offices, it made it sexy for a little bit,
25 and that's important. We need the buzz, we need

1
2 the sexiness to draw the attention to the cause
3 and, again, we need to make it work for us. So
4 because of that, I think it can help open more
5 doors for us. And, again, so we need to leverage
6 this momentum as much as possible and lean on this
7 and see where we can take it.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: And while
9 we're at it, we're going to urge my colleagues to
10 sign on to the resolution 1196-A and my hope is
11 that we will be having a conversation about a vote
12 in the very near future so that we can take
13 advantage of the legislative session in Albany,
14 which will wrap up in about three weeks or so.

15 Council Member Brewer?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.
17 I am a sponsor of your resolution and I want to
18 congratulate you on all your hard work. As
19 somebody who spends a lot of time in the social
20 media technology world, there are these huge 1,200
21 person meet ups on a regular basis and maybe at
22 some point offline we could talk about presenting
23 at one of them because that does create the buzz
24 and you would be able to talk what you've done
25 thus far on the issue of using social media and my

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

guess is in this amazing group, you might find some other opportunities, so..

JAMES PARDES: Fantastic.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you, Council Member. Any other questions for the panel? James, Lauren, thank you so much. Lauren, keep up the good work, it took us a couple of months, but we've got our act together and my hope is that we can have an internal conversation about moving this resolution out of the Council and to take advantage of the session that will wrap up in several weeks in the Assembly and in the Senate. So thank you both--

JAMES PARDES: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: --tremendously for your advocacy. I'm calling up Ted Lawson, Save Lives New York New York Foundation Now. No, Save Lives Now New York Foundation, and Sara Jacobs, who is here representing Assemblyman Felix Ortiz, who is one of the sponsors in the Assembly there.

You guys can flip a coin; gentleman

1
2 could be courteous and let the lady go first.
3 Identify yourself for the record, please. Speak
4 into the mic or the sergeant gets cranky.

5 TED LAWSON: Go ahead, please.

6 SARA JACOBS: Hi, good morning,
7 Sara Jacobs, representing Assembly Member Felix
8 Ortiz. And also thank you, Lauren, I'm glad I
9 finally got to hear you first person, I heard
10 about you through the Assembly Members, so it's a
11 pleasure.

12 The Assemblyman states the
13 following. The greatest gift that one person can
14 give another is life. Organ donation makes this
15 gift possible. Each person has the potential to
16 save up to eight lives and, sadly, every day 18
17 people die in the United States waiting for an
18 organ. New York has not been a leader in organ
19 donation. We currently rank an abysmal 48th out
20 of 50 states as far as residents signing up to be
21 organ donors.

22 The passage of Lauren's Law will
23 increase the number of organ donors in our state
24 by requiring that they fill out the organ donation
25 portion of their driver's license application with

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

either yes or not at this time.

The Assemblyman further states: I would like to thank the New York City Council and the New York City Council's Committee on Health for hosting this hearing and for their introduction of Resolution number 1196, which calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass legislation I am currently carrying, Lauren's Law. We have received a great deal of support for this legislation from various organizations and nonprofits and I am thankful for the support of the New York City Council as well.

TED LAWSON: My name is Ted Lawson, I'm President and Executive Director of Save Lives Now New York Foundation. I'd like to thank the Health Committee for allowing me to testify today about the organ donation crisis. We are an organization in New York state focused on developing innovative public policy initiatives to increase the supply of organs available for life saving transplants.

How did I become involved in organ donation? In 1992, I had heart palpitations which caused dizziness and led me to see a cardiologist.

1
2 I was told at the time I had cardiomyopathy, a
3 disease that would only get worse. In 2004, I had
4 a heart pump inserted in my chest to assist my
5 heart and was put on the waiting list. In 2005, I
6 was one of the fortunate ones: I got a heart
7 transplant. One in three of us didn't make it.

8 For the past seven years, I've
9 dedicated my life to giving back to my community
10 for this gift of life. I served as a nine to five
11 full-time volunteer at the New York Organ Donor
12 Network, New York City's organ procurement
13 organization. I served on the Patient Affairs
14 Committee at UNOS, specializing in paired kidney
15 exchanges and living donation. I spent
16 considerable time presenting to local high schools
17 and colleges about organ donation and
18 transplantation. Recently, I've been lecturing to
19 medical and nursing students. I've done
20 everything possible as an activist in the local,
21 state, and national level to see that those on the
22 transplant waiting list get the same second chance
23 at life that I did.

24 What an incredible tragedy and
25 waste that organs are going into the grave, rather

1
2 than providing a gift of life to somebody on the
3 waiting list who is literally caught in a horrible
4 life and death waiting game. Insanity is the only
5 way I can describe the current situation in New
6 York. Let me start with the classical definition
7 of insanity: Doing the same thing over and over
8 again, but somehow, miraculously, expecting a
9 different result. Is it any surprise that New
10 York state ranks second to the bottom in the
11 nation in organ donation registrations? Is it any
12 surprise we currently have 10,000 New Yorkers on
13 the waiting list, the second highest waiting list
14 in the U.S.? Is it any surprise the average
15 waiting wait for a kidney in New York is between
16 five and eight years? Is it any surprise that 612
17 New Yorkers died last year while waiting for a
18 transplant? The answer to every question is no.
19 There is no surprises since--at all since we
20 haven't tried to do anything significantly
21 different in New York to change the current dismal
22 state of affairs. New Yorkers are always proud to
23 say I'm from New York, but New Yorkers deserve a
24 lot better than the current donation system which
25 has failed miserably and needs immediate change.

1
2 Lauren's Law is a direct response
3 to this insanity and unacceptable situation we
4 find ourselves in. We are grateful to
5 Councilwoman Maria del Carmen Arroyo for proposing
6 this resolution to support Lauren's Law that we
7 are discussing today. Save Lives Now New York is
8 grateful to Councilman Daniel Garodnick for
9 hosting a press conference on the steps of City
10 Hall last Thursday in support of Lauren's Law.
11 And Councilman Robert Jackson also spoke in
12 support of the bill.

13 Many members of the state
14 legislature have worked hard to get this bill
15 passed: Senator David Carlucci, Assemblyman
16 Richard Gottfried, Assemblyman Felix Ortiz, and
17 Jim Yates [phonetic], who serves as counsel to the
18 Speaker, Shelly Silver. We want to thank them for
19 having the guts and the courage and the vision to
20 make a difference. I applaud all the legislators
21 for following in the footsteps of other courageous
22 politicians who didn't stand on the sidelines, but
23 took action when they saw people dying needlessly.

24 In our lifetime, we have witnessed
25 the passage of laws in five major areas which have

1
2 saved hundreds of thousands of lives: Mandatory
3 seat belts, car seats for children, helmet laws,
4 laws against driving while intoxicated, and a ban
5 on smoking in public areas. This took the courage
6 of dedicated and concerned citizens and
7 legislators who went up against powerful
8 opposition. My question is this: Who would not
9 want to help save lives? We need today to add
10 Lauren's Law to this list of landmark legislation.

11 We always tell people to talk with
12 their families about organ donation and make a
13 decision. However, the unfortunate reality is
14 that most people do not realize the importance of
15 donating their organs until they or someone in
16 their family is in need of one. Lauren's Law
17 involves mandated choice where everyone will make
18 a decision when they apply for or renew a driver's
19 license or when they register to vote. The
20 choices are simple: Either yes or not at this
21 time. The law would not require that the decision
22 be made--would only require that a decision be
23 made, no one would be judged by their choice.

24 Since every poll taken shows
25 Americans are overwhelmingly in favor of organ

1
2 donation, we are confident that Lauren's Law will
3 significantly increase the number of New Yorkers
4 on the state registry.

5 Finally, let me thank you by saying
6 thank you to the Council for letting me express my
7 views.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,
9 Ted, Sara, for coming to talk to us today. Sara,
10 my regards to the Assemblyman and my appreciation
11 to him for being the prime sponsor of the Assembly
12 bill that is pending action in the legislature.
13 And as I said previously, my goal is to get a
14 conversation going here about the resolution and a
15 vote in time for conclusion of the legislative
16 session in Albany before the end of June.

17 Colleagues, any questions? Thank
18 you both for your advocacy and for taking the time
19 to come to talk to us today, thank you.

20 Okay. We have another conversation
21 to be had at the Committee today regarding the
22 farm bill introduced by Council Member Gale
23 Brewer, co-sponsored by yours truly. We're going
24 to take about a ten minute recess and come back
25 for the second portion of the hearing.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

[Long pause]

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Welcome back everyone. Sergeant, am I coming through? Yeah? I can't hear. Eddie? Sergeant, are we--we're good? Okay.

Welcome back everyone. We will now be discussing our second resolution at our hearing today, the Preconsidered Resolution sponsored by Council Member Gale Brewer calls upon the United States Congress to pass and the President to reauthorize an adequately funded farm bill that creates a strong and healthy food system.

In New York City, more than one-fifth of the population lives at or below the city poverty line. In 2012, reauthorization of the Farm Bill provides a critical opportunity to address hunger, improve food access, positively impact the economy, and protect the environment.

One such program authorized by the farm bill is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, otherwise known as SNAP, which is critical safety net for more than 1.8 million New Yorkers. SNAP also provides benefits to the local economy. Every \$1 in benefits generates \$1.80 in

1
2 local economy activity. However, many individuals
3 enrolled in SNAP have their benefits run out
4 before the end of the month, forcing them to rely
5 on emergency food programs that are already at
6 capacity.

7 Some of the proposals before
8 Congress would drastically reduce SNAP funding.
9 This is just one program authorized by the farm
10 bill and its impact on New Yorkers. There are
11 other noteworthy programs which must be protected,
12 including Food Emergency Assistance programs,
13 Community Food Project Competitive Grant program,
14 Senior Farms Market Nutrition program, Healthy
15 Food Financing Initiative, and expanding the use
16 of electronic benefit transfers processing in
17 farmer's markets and community supported
18 agricultural programs.

19 We are also concerned with programs
20 that directly help farmers, such as the Farmer's
21 Market Promotion program, Value-Added Producer
22 grants, and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher
23 Development program. The impact of these programs
24 is the production of good jobs, good food.

25 There are many other programs and

1
2 initiatives that come from the Farm Bill and we
3 will hear more about these proposals from my
4 colleague and advocacy organizations that are here
5 to testify today.

6 As a reminder for those of you who
7 may have joined us later, if you're here to
8 testify and you have not filled out the form that
9 I'm holding up here, we do not know that you're
10 here and we want to hear from you, so please see
11 the sergeant so you can fill one out.

12 And now I would like to call on the
13 prime sponsor of the Preconsidered Resolution,
14 Council Member Gale Brewer, to say a few words.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Well thank
16 you very much, Madam Chair. And I think the New
17 York Times today picks up on what you're talking
18 about. First of all, there's a big article
19 nationally, one in four adolescents could develop
20 Type II diabetes from obesity, and that's a pretty
21 startling figure. We've been talking about this
22 issue for a long time in New York City.

23 And second, of course, there's a
24 big article in the New York section today about
25 the lack of a middle class and the developing

1
2 numbers of people who are poor in the city of New
3 York. So even though it may not seem directly
4 relevant, to me, it's perfectly relevant. And
5 certainly, you and Speaker Quinn have been talking
6 about these issues for quite some time. I think
7 we all know the great work the Speaker has done as
8 a strong advocate for healthy, locally grown food,
9 which would address, in my opinion, both of the
10 issues I referenced earlier.

11 And as part of the Speaker's Food
12 Works Plan, I have passed two bills, Local Law 49
13 in 2011 and Local Law 50 during the same year,
14 supporting greenhouses and supporting local food
15 sourcing, meaning that our city agencies are going
16 to have to--are going to be mandated to figure out
17 how to--for particularly jails, Department of
18 Education, homeless shelters--figure out a way of
19 having local food in everybody's diet to address
20 these very important issues.

21 The 2012 Farm Bill, as you
22 indicated, that is currently being considered by
23 Congress represents a tremendous opportunity to
24 build on the momentum that we have produced here
25 in New York City on hunger, on the access to

1
2 healthy local food, on environmental protection,
3 and local economic growth. The current draft of
4 the Senate Farm Bill has some positive provisions,
5 but contains several proposed cuts that are very
6 troubling, including a proposed 4.49 billion cut
7 to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,
8 known as SNAP, other crucial programs that should
9 be funded in the Farm Bill include the Farmer
10 Market Promotion program, Value-Added Producer
11 Grants, and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher
12 Development program. This resolution urges
13 federal support for all of these important
14 programs and the development of a 2012 Farm Bill
15 that supports a robust food system in New York
16 City and across the United States.

17 I just want to add, last year, we
18 went on a farm tour with members of the City
19 Council staff and city agencies and we know now
20 that the state of New York can produce all the
21 local farm products needed for our city of New
22 York. What we need is the will and the support in
23 order to be able to purchase them for our
24 agencies. New York City purchases just under what
25 the federal government purchases for the

1
2 Department of Defense, and what we need is the
3 will to support those purchases and this Farm Bill
4 would address many of those issues.

5 Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you,
7 Council Member Brewer. I want to call up the
8 first panel. Colleen Second, who has been with us
9 since very early this morning, thank you, Colleen,
10 for being here. Triada Stampas, Food Bank New
11 York City, and Qiana Mickie, New York City Food
12 and Farm Bill Working Group. Qiana? You're here,
13 ah, okay.

14 Okay. Make sure that your mic is
15 on, identify yourself for the record, and speak
16 into the mic or, as you've heard me say before,
17 the sergeants get a little cranky because they
18 can't pick it up on the recording. So you may
19 begin when you're ready in whatever order you'd
20 like to follow.

21 COLLEEN SECOND: Good morning, my
22 name is Colleen Second, I'm a resident of the
23 Brownsville/Ocean Hill community. I appreciate
24 the opportunity to give testimony regarding the
25 reauthorization of Resolution T2012-4774 to

1
2 reauthorize an adequately funded farm bill that
3 creates a strong and healthy food system.

4 First, I want to acknowledge the
5 continued commitment of the Council, Chairperson
6 Maria del Carmen Arroyo and the Committee on
7 Health, for holding this important and timely
8 hearing for the residents of New York City.

9 In my testimony today, I wish to
10 highlight ways to ensure that the Farm Bill will
11 create a strong and healthy food system. The Food
12 Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 is the most
13 recent omnibus farm bill. On June 18, 2008,
14 became law and it governs federal farm and food
15 policy that covers a wide range of programs and
16 provisions. It is the primary tool for reducing
17 hunger in the United States.

18 The barriers of unemployment,
19 poverty, and food insecurity are major obstacles
20 to many New Yorkers' quest to providing an
21 adequate and safe supply of food to their
22 households. From birth, proper nutrition is a
23 necessity to growth since it directly affects the
24 mental and physical health in young children in
25 addition to their economic productivity and

1
2 overall academic achievement. However, judging
3 from the March 2012 New York State employment
4 rates that stand at 8.7%, many households may not
5 have been able to access healthy food.

6 Additionally, in 2010, 36.6 million adults in the
7 United States experienced food insecurity, while
8 some 16.2 million children under the age of 18 had
9 no access to nutrition.

10 There should be a call to end
11 hunger, food insecurity, and poverty in the new
12 farm bill by strengthening and maintaining federal
13 food and nutrition assistance program. In 2008,
14 55% of food insecure households participated in
15 one or more of the three largest federal food and
16 nutrition assistance programs. The Supplemental
17 Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, touches the
18 lives of millions for it has alleviated hunger and
19 has improved nutrition by increasing the food
20 purchasing power of low income households,
21 enabling them to obtain a more nutritious diet by
22 preparing food at home.

23 In 2010 and 2011, SNAP helped lift
24 3.9 million Americans, of which 1.7 million were
25 children, above 101% of the poverty level, with

1
2 New York City experiencing the large percentage of
3 33.5%. Overall, the United States population has
4 seen a dramatic rise in obesity rates over the
5 last 20 years. With New York's obesity rate
6 increasing from 20% to 22% with its highest rates
7 among people living in low income neighborhoods.

8 A prescription to prevent obesity
9 is to increase funding to the specialty crops
10 title, which covers fruits and vegetables, while
11 at the same time, providing support to small and
12 medium size fruit and vegetable farmers through
13 community food projects and the Competitive Grant
14 program and the Farmer's Market Nutrition program.

15 There should be increased funding
16 to the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women,
17 WIC, and the Farmer's Market Nutrition program.
18 WIC promotes good health, nutritious food,
19 nutrition education, and referrals to health and
20 other social services to pregnant women, mothers,
21 and their children up to five years with the FMNP
22 locally grown produce can be purchased at farmer's
23 markets.

24 Findings of the 2010 Hunger in
25 America indicate that 5.7 million different

1
2 people, or 1 in 50 Americans, have received
3 emergency food assistance from the food assistance
4 system in any week, therefore, increasing the
5 Emergency Food Assistance Program, TEFAP, is
6 imperative. TEFAP meets the short-term emergency
7 food needs of low income Americans and vulnerable
8 populations of children, adults, and the elderly.
9 Additionally, it serves the agricultural community
10 by using surplus commodities purchased by USDA
11 from farmers and other producers.

12 Originally, under the research
13 title geared towards providing practical solutions
14 to the day-to-day problems experienced by farmers,
15 so it's [off mic] channel to promote research
16 towards industrial farming. There should be a
17 reversal of this trend and small scale farmers
18 should be steered towards producing of non-
19 genetically engineered crops and livestock breeds
20 while promoting farming practices that are
21 environmentally safe.

22 The opportunity to create a strong
23 and healthy food system has presented itself
24 through the reauthorization of the Farm Bill.
25 Therefore, to make healthy food accessible, there

1
2 should be a strengthened safety net more funding
3 extended to small farmer research and the growing
4 of organic food promoted, while at the same time
5 conserving the environment.

6 Thank you.

7 TRIADA STAMPAS: Good morning, my
8 name is Triada Stampas, I'm the Senior Director of
9 Government Relations at the Food Bank for New York
10 City. Thank you, Chairperson Arroyo and the
11 members of the Health Committee for holding this
12 hearing. Thank you, Council Member Brewer, for
13 authoring this resolution, which the Food Bank
14 enthusiastically supports.

15 While there are many programs in
16 the Farm Bill that will impact New Yorkers, my
17 testimony will focus on the anti-hunger programs
18 in the nutrition title, Title 4 of the Farm Bill
19 as those represent our country's biggest
20 investment in fighting hunger in this country.

21 The food stamp program in
22 particular has come under attack in Congress and I
23 want to express appreciation and gratitude for the
24 City Council's attention to this issue, especially
25 over the past year in signing a letter to the

1
2 members of the Deficit Reduction Super Committee
3 opposing cuts to the food stamp program then and
4 in signing a letter once again to members of
5 Congress about opposing cuts to the Farm Bill now,
6 and with this resolution.

7 One in five New Yorkers relies on
8 the food stamp program and has since at least
9 December of 2010, which is a sure a sign as any
10 that the recession has not yet quite left us and
11 our city.

12 So a couple of things that I wanted
13 to kind of specific threats to alert the City
14 Council to at this point in the process, and
15 there's fuller information in my testimony. In
16 particular, the Senate Agriculture Committee
17 passed a draft version of the Farm Bill. It
18 contains \$4.49 billion in cuts to SNAP, it
19 contains some funding increases in policy
20 improvements to TEFAP, the Federal Emergency Food
21 Assistance Program. The cuts to SNAP will all but
22 wash out any positive effect of increasing funding
23 for emergency food. The food stamp program is our
24 first line of defense against hunger, emergency
25 food is the last line of defense so when the first

1
2 line of defense is threatened, the last line
3 really can't be expected to hold.

4 The \$4.49 billion in cuts to food
5 stamps targets recipients of public housing
6 subsidies in 14 states. And what that means for
7 us locally, in New York City 190,000 households
8 living in NYCHA public housing were receiving
9 federal Section 8 vouchers will have their
10 benefits cut, some down to the minimum benefit
11 level of \$16 a month if this proposal goes
12 through--190,000 households represents just under
13 half of the households living in NYCHA housing in
14 the city where the average income is about
15 \$23,000.

16 So the language being used in
17 Washington to describe this cut is that it is a
18 technical correction, a closing of a loophole.
19 This bureaucratic language really obscures the
20 fact that low income households are going to see a
21 sharp decrease in their ability to afford food.
22 The Congressional Budget Office estimates a
23 decrease of \$90 per month for impacted households.
24 And that not only impacts those households, but it
25 impacts the buying power of the community and the

1
2 ability of that community to support jobs in the
3 food sector and in local businesses more broadly.

4 So wanted to call your attention to
5 that. The House of Representatives has yet to
6 come up with a Farm Bill draft of its own, but we
7 can anticipate that proposed cuts to the food
8 stamp program will be deeper there, so we
9 certainly, as an advocacy community have our work
10 cut out for us.

11 I will say that the increases in
12 the Federal Emergency Food Assistance Program,
13 TEFAP, that are included in the Senate Agriculture
14 Committee draft are \$160 million in mandatory
15 funding over the next ten years, which doesn't
16 even make up for the loss in TEFAP just over this
17 past year. The Emergency Food Assistance Program
18 nationally had lost \$173 million in the past year
19 alone. In New York City, what that's translated
20 to is 10 million fewer meals for food pantries and
21 soup kitchens this year compared to the same point
22 we were at last year.

23 Food pantries and soup kitchens
24 have closed, we've lost about 50 this year for
25 lack of resources, food and other operating

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

resources. The ones that remain are struggling to support the increased need that they're seeing.

So, again, increases to TEFAP are necessary and much needed. Cuts to SNAP at the same time will only wash away any positive impact from that.

So, again, the Food Bank supports passage of this resolution and deeply appreciates the time and attention you're giving this issue, particularly in the middle of budget season. Turning your focus to critical federal issues is an important thing that you are doing today, so thank you.

QIANA MICKIE: Thank you, good morning. Good morning, Chairperson Arroyo and the Health Committee Members. My name is Qiana Mickie and I am here representing the New York City Food and Farm Bill Working Group.

The working group is made up of over 100 organizations and hundreds of individuals from anti-hunger, food justice, conservation, public health, and farming sectors from New York City and New York state, all dedicated to the reform of our agricultural policy. I'm happy to

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

speak on behalf of the group and say we are here
 in support of this resolution.

I've learned through my work with
 group that the Food and Farm Bill is the single
 greatest influence on who are farmers, what they
 grow, and what we all eat. It also determines how
 billions in taxpayer dollars are spent shaping our
 food system from producer to consumer.

Through our efforts of advocacy and
 community outreach, the working group wants all
 New Yorkers to understand what an enormous stake
 we have in the Food and Farm Bill. Eight million
 of us spend \$30 billion annually on food, yet
 hunger persists in New York City. The numbers by
 now are all too sadly familiar. I will quickly
 just restate. An all-time high of 1.84 million
 New York City residents rely on the Supplemental
 Nutrition Assistance Program and 1.4 million of us
 rely on emergency food. One in six of us,
 including more than 400,000 of our children, live
 in households facing food insecurity. Many of us
 find unhealthy food far more accessible than
 healthy food. People always are shocked when we
 show--I help participate in our digging in the

1
2 Farm Bill workshops in the community--people are
3 always shocked that the USD--when we show that the
4 USDA recommends to fill your plate with mostly
5 fruits and vegetables, but then show the majority
6 of funding from the Food and Farm Bill provide
7 incentives for the production of crops that were
8 used in processed foods that are high in added
9 sugars and added fats.

10 Past bills perpetrate the paradox
11 of chronic hunger and widespread obesity. Nearly
12 25% of our children and 67% of our adults are
13 overweight or obese. In New York state, 6.1
14 billion is spent annually fighting diet related
15 diseases. We as New Yorkers need to remind the
16 House, Senate, and the President that, while many
17 people go hungry, suffer from obesity, and other
18 diet related diseases, struggles to make ends meet
19 to get food on the table, this is not the time to
20 make cuts to Americas' food safety net.

21 I am encouraged to see in the
22 resolution that the Council understands that the
23 2012 Food and Farm Bill should increase access to
24 affordable, healthy food and expand funding for
25 our programs such as the Community Food

1
2 Competitive Grants, maintaining funding to Senior
3 Farmer's Market Nutrition Program, and increase
4 capacity of food retailers, like farmer's markets,
5 community supported agriculture, and for them to
6 use the EBT, Electronic Benefit Transfer. I also
7 heard and was encouraged to hear mention of
8 programs such as Value-Add Producer Grants,
9 Farmer's Market Promotion Program, and continuing
10 support Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development
11 programs. Also, in my reading, I've noticed that
12 moving forward, the program for Socially
13 Disadvantaged Farmers, I believe with those other
14 programs should also receive adequate funding and
15 be included in the 2012 Food and Farm Bill. All
16 these programs can help create jobs, strengthen
17 urban rural businesses, and increase the local
18 food access to city residents.

19 Federal policies are putting
20 national food sovereignty at risk. Nationwide, we
21 are losing farm land and our farmers are fewer and
22 older. Our system of production distribution is
23 unsustainable. Our fruits and vegetables are
24 grown on land in danger of development. In New
25 York state alone, it's home to more than 36,000

1
2 farms that generate \$5 billion in annual revenue,
3 however, this valuable resource is threatened as
4 we lose farm land to development, especially near
5 our cities.

6 With the 2012 Food and Farm Bill,
7 there is an opportunity to reevaluate our farm and
8 food policies, maintaining the most beneficial and
9 when it makes good sense, changing others. While
10 we consider the role of our federal government,
11 the 2012 Food and Farm Bill should support a
12 sustainable, healthy food system for all,
13 eliminate hunger, improve health, and stimulate
14 job growth, but not at the expense of the
15 environment.

16 On behalf of the working group, I
17 will submit our Why New York City Cares and
18 Principles documents. We've also submitted these
19 documents to the Senate Agricultural Committee.

20 Once again, we applaud introduction
21 of this resolution and urge the Council to pass
22 it. Thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: First of
24 all, thank you for the excellent testimony, all
25 three of you. One of my questions is, do you know

1
2 the timing of what is happening in Washington?
3 'Cause it's such a frightening aspect that the
4 Congress doesn't understand on all levels farm
5 land, anti-hunger efforts, economic development,
6 there's no end to the positive aspects of a good
7 farm bill. So I'm just wondering--and your
8 testimony is so eloquent in addressing all those
9 issues--do you have any sense of the timing of
10 what they're doing in Washington?

11 QIANA MICKIE: Me in particular or-
12 -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:
14 [Interposing] Or anybody, whoever can answer the
15 question.

16 QIANA MICKIE: Thank you. From my
17 understanding, it seems that the Senate wants to
18 go to the floor closer to Memorial Day, but I'm
19 not sure about the House of Representatives. Does
20 anyone have more?

21 [Off mic]

22 TRIADA STAMPAS: The House of
23 Representatives is still completing its Farm Bill
24 hearings and taking public comment and is expected
25 to come up with a draft by the end of this month

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

or early June, so amendments and markups are anticipated in early June.

On the Senate side, the Farm Bill might get floor time in June. That's what some of the latest news reports are saying that Majority Leader Harry Reid might be able to make time for it to reach the floor in June.

I will say that Senator Gillibrand had and withdrew an amendment during the Senate Committee markup process that she may introduce when the bill reaches the floor to introduce a sense of the Senate that child hunger should not increase as a result of this Farm Bill and if that comes to pass, I urge the City Council to support her in those efforts. She has truly been an anti-hunger champion in that body and in this process.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Great, I think she's one of the few New Yorkers on the Agriculture Committee too, if I remember correctly.

TRIADA STAMPAS: The one and only on the Senate side, yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's my understanding. My other question is, I mean,

1
2 obviously, we understand the economic impact of
3 the Farm Bill on every single level, I'm just
4 wondering if you could address that any further.
5 The idea, of course, is so clear to all of us that
6 when you get food stamps, there's an economic
7 impact in the city of New York, but I just didn't
8 know does that carry, does that mean anything to
9 anybody in Washington? Do they understand any of
10 this?

11 TRIADA STAMPAS: I can't comment
12 on, you know, whether it means anything to anyone
13 in Washington, but to kind of give a little bit
14 more detail on that, the multiplier effect of food
15 stamps is well-known, it's estimated anywhere
16 between \$1.70 and \$1.80. The Center for American
17 Progress recently did analysis that found that
18 every billion dollar cut in food stamp benefits
19 results in the loss of more than 13,000 jobs. So
20 at the low end right now, we're looking at a \$4
21 1/2 billion cut, which is what the Senate is
22 proposing, the House has made moves to cut
23 billions and billions dollars more, but we're
24 looking at \$4 1/2 billion in cuts translating to
25 something like 60,000 jobs lost as a result.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I think there's lots of questions that we could ask, but we're all in agreement on this end. So thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you. I just wonder why, at a time when nationally we're facing such an incredibly economic difficulty where families are struggling to put food on the table, we would consider cutting benefit programs that help to bridge a family's opportunity to feed themselves, it's just insane.

Thank you all for your testimony and--

TRIADA STAMPAS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: --I'm going to call up the next panel. Sandra Jean-Louis, Public Health Solutions; Margaret Brown, NRDC; Joel Berg, New York City Coalition Against Hunger; and Louise Feld, Citizens Committee for Children. I believe you guys have done this before. If we can get another chair.

FEMALE VOICE: Oh, I'm sorry, let me skootch.

CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: We have

1
2 enough. Speak into the mic, identify yourselves
3 for the record. You may begin in whichever order
4 you feel comfortable in.

5 SANDRA JEAN-LOUIS: Good afternoon,
6 my name is Sandra Jean-Louis, I'm the Director of
7 Access to Health and for Benefits at Public Health
8 Solutions. My testimony today would focus mostly
9 on the food stamps program since this is a program
10 that I run. I am, again, I'm here on behalf of
11 Public Health Solutions, a not-for-profit agency
12 that has been operating the largest WIC program in
13 New York state for almost 35 years, serving 45,000
14 women, infants, and children.

15 In addition, we run a growing food
16 stamps outreach and enrollment program which helps
17 close to 2,000 families successfully enroll
18 annually in the program.

19 We appreciate the opportunity to
20 speak in support of the Council's resolution
21 calling on the United States House of
22 Representatives and the United States Senate to
23 pass and for the President to reauthorize an
24 adequately funded farm bill that creates a strong
25 and healthy food system. We have a longstanding

1
2 interest in and concern for equity in food access
3 and the nutritional health of all New Yorkers.

4 First, our organization would like
5 to acknowledge the continued commitment of the
6 Council to addressing the problem of hunger in New
7 York City. Thank you for your leadership and
8 ongoing support for the City's food assistance
9 program, including WIC and food stamps.

10 As you know, the recession which
11 began in 2009, has pushed many New Yorkers into
12 poverty, driving them to rely on the food stamps
13 program to feed themselves and their families.
14 The New York City Human Resources Administration
15 reports that as of April 2010, 1.7 million New
16 Yorkers were enrolled in the food stamps program,
17 compared to 1.5 million in April 2009, and 1
18 million in April 2005, representing the largest
19 increase ever in food stamps use in the city.
20 Enrollment in the program has remained at this
21 level in 2012.

22 Even with those historic levels of
23 enrollment in SNAP statewide, one in six children
24 live in homes without enough food on the table.
25 Further, 30% of New Yorkers eligible for SNAP,

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

over 1.4 million people do not receive them.

In addition, SNAP not only provide much needed help to families, but it also stimulates New York City's local economy. Every \$1 in benefits generate 1.8 in economic activity that supports local neighborhood supermarkets, corner stores, and farmer's markets. Yet, proposals at the federal level would drastically affect the program's capacity to assist those in need in New York and nationwide.

Currently, the United States Congress threatens to eliminate all SNAP funding. The United States Senate Agriculture Committee draft of the 2012 Farm Bill, while including a much needed increase in funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program, proposes cutting SNAP by \$4.49 billion.

Due to the work of the Council and advocates, the state and city have recently made important stride to improve the food stamp application system by adopting a shortened application form by creating the SSI only and homebound unit that process applications entirely through the mail or fax for people to receiving

1
2 disability benefits or who are both elderly and
3 disabled and by creating a policy of accepting
4 food stamps application by fax and mail for all
5 clients.

6 Last week, Governor Cuomo announced
7 that New York State will end the finger imaging
8 requirement for all food stamps applicants and
9 recipients, helping to further simplify the
10 application process and removing an important
11 barrier to reducing hunger among the state's
12 children and adults.

13 With these important administrative
14 improvements, the City is well positioned to
15 further help eligible New Yorkers enroll in this
16 vital program. It is imperative that critical
17 SNAP funding remain available. Therefore, Public
18 Health Solutions supports the New York City's
19 Council resolution calling on the United States
20 House of Representative and the United States
21 Senate to pass and for the President to
22 reauthorize an adequately funded farm bill that
23 creates a strong and healthy food system.

24 Thank you.

25 MARGARET BROWN: Good morning, my

1
2 name is Margaret Brown, I'm a legal fellow at the
3 Natural Resources Defense Council, which has
4 worked for over four decades on environmental and
5 public health issues in the New York region.
6 Having worked for many years at the national and
7 regional level on food and agriculture issues,
8 NRDC is now engaged in a multiyear project
9 dedicated to increasing the amount of sustainable
10 food produced and consumed in the greater New York
11 metropolitan region. As the Council knows,
12 providing more local and sustainable food to New
13 Yorkers can improve public health, grow our
14 economy, and protect the environment.

15 In short, we strongly support the
16 resolution before the Committee and applaud the
17 Council for raising important pending federal
18 issues that directly impact our food system. Of
19 course, this is not the first time the City
20 Council has shown leadership on regional food
21 issues. Last year, the Council passed the New
22 York City Food Metrics Bill, which NRDC testified
23 in support of, as an important first step in
24 better understanding how to improve the City's
25 food system. And this resolution only further

1
2 contributes to the Council's leadership on this
3 critical issue.

4 The continued and adequate funding
5 of the nutrition title in the 2012 Farm Bill is
6 critical for New Yorkers and anti-hunger advocates
7 have been outstanding in championing that cause--
8 many of them have spoken today. While NRDC fully
9 supports these efforts, our brief statement today
10 focuses on three other parts of the resolution
11 that are essential to the health and wellbeing of
12 all New Yorkers.

13 First, we support the Council's
14 Resolution in calling for the inclusion and
15 funding in the 2012 Farm Bill of the Farmer's
16 Market Promotion Program, Value-Added Producer
17 Grants, and the Beginning Farmer Rancher and
18 Development Program. These programs provide the
19 education, training, and financial support that
20 regional, new and/or transitioning farmers need to
21 succeed. Though these programs are not very
22 costly, they are invaluable in their benefit to
23 both farmers and consumers.

24 Second, we commend the Council for
25 recognizing in the resolution the importance of

1
2 preserving our rural landscapes and natural
3 resource base which surround and support our city.
4 A well-funded conservation title is essential to
5 protecting our environment. Promoting sustainable
6 agriculture programs and funding conservation
7 measures can encourage the type of farming that
8 builds soil health, prevents erosion, protects our
9 water from excessive nutrients or pesticides.
10 This is critical throughout the state, and the
11 country for that matter, but particularly in the
12 unfiltered New York watershed of the Catskill-
13 Delaware region, where ill-considered development
14 projects and the potential impacts of gas drilling
15 continue to threaten our irreplaceable water
16 supply.

17 Third, we applaud the City
18 Council's Resolution for its support of the
19 modernization of the 45-year old Hunts Point
20 Produce Market, which serves as the main
21 distribution point for 60% of the city's fruits
22 and vegetables and 22 million people in the
23 region. However, we respectfully recommend a
24 small modification to the language in the
25 resolution to ensure that any federally allocated

1
2 monies for redevelopment should also support a
3 wholesale farmer's market in Hunts Point. Despite
4 being the largest wholesale market in the country,
5 only a small portion of the food coming through
6 Hunts Point is regional. Giving small and mid-
7 size farmers better market access is key to
8 ensuring their economic success, protecting our
9 environment, and providing New Yorkers with fresh,
10 healthy food. Governor Cuomo called for the
11 development of a Hunts Point farmer's market in
12 his 2011 State of the State, and just this month
13 the New York Times Editorial Board came out in
14 support of the project. This small change in the
15 language of the resolution would further highlight
16 the importance of including a wholesale farmer's
17 market in the revitalization of Hunts Point.

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

25 Thank you for the opportunity to

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

testify today.

JOEL BERG: Hello, I'm Joel Berg, Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger. I thank the Committee, thank Councilwoman Brewer, I thank Speaker Quinn, and the whole Council for your continued focus on food issues, and thank you for your years and years and years of leadership opposing finger imaging for food stamps recipients. It's good to finally live in a city that no longer continues that practice as Arizona does.

I'll focus on just a few brief themes. Number one, the importance of understanding that consumers and agricultural producers are in this together. I'm thrilled that NRDC testified on the need to preserve the food stamps program and I am thrilled to say that hunger advocates support strong environmental and conservation measures in this bill.

Since the New Deal, the aim of agribusinesses has been to divide and conquer, to basically say that there is somehow some differentiation between the environmental needs, the consumer needs, the rural development needs of

1
2 this bill, and if we have any prayer of having a
3 more progressive bill, we need to build a new
4 coalition against the farm--about the Farm Bill
5 that brings together consumers, that brings
6 together small farmers, that brings together
7 environmental advocates for a new type of bill
8 that also respects the American taxpayer.

9 I have to point out for the record,
10 it is fraudulent for either house of Congress to
11 claim that the cuts in the food stamps program are
12 required to reduce the deficit. None of the
13 proposals will reduce the deficit. All they're
14 going to do is take even more money away from
15 hungry, food insecure low income Americans and
16 give more money to corporate agribusinesses. The
17 very conservative politicians that sunk our
18 economic ship are now trying to take away their
19 life preservers, it really is an outrage. And I
20 must say, this is also tied to campaign finance
21 reform, or a lack thereof. Corporate
22 agribusinesses have given over \$500 million to
23 federal campaigns over the last decade--\$500
24 million.

25 Now as you know, I'm a nonpartisan,

1
2 nonprofit leader, but over the years I've been
3 asked by friends well the side you sort of seem to
4 be aligned with, they're sort of lame some days,
5 what do you think about that. I say, well my side
6 may be lame, but my side doesn't cut food stamps.
7 My side's cutting food stamps.

8 The idea that the United States
9 Senate, which is purportedly run by democrats,
10 would cut \$4 1/2 billion from poor people's food
11 on top of two years of previous cuts and poor
12 people's food on the claim that, oh, well, the
13 House is going to be much, much, much, much, much
14 worse honestly is embarrassing.

15 I too want to commend Senator
16 Kirsten Gillibrand for being the only, the only
17 democrat on the committee, and in fact the only
18 member of the committee who voted against the bill
19 in committee because it would cut food stamps
20 program for low income people. We don't have to
21 accept this, it is a false choice, it is not about
22 deficit reduction, the bill would actually
23 increase the ability of wealthy people to get farm
24 subsidies. There are hundreds of people in New
25 York City, including people with the last name

1
2 Rockefeller, who get money from our tax dollars,
3 often for land they've never even seen, it's an
4 outrage. We should have some priorities of a
5 country and make sure we're about feeding hungry
6 people first. It's good for our economy, it's
7 good for our education, instead of more corporate
8 agribusiness for those who need it least.

9 If we're interested, and I
10 challenge conservatives, if you're against
11 welfare, let's start with eliminating just the
12 dollop of the billions and billions and billions
13 of corporate welfare.

14 Thank you.

15 LOUISE FELD: It's true. Good
16 afternoon, my name is Louise Feld, and I'm the
17 Policy Associate for Food and Economic Security at
18 Citizens' Committee for Children. CCC is a multi-
19 issue child advocacy organization dedicated to
20 ensuring that every New York child is healthy,
21 housed, educated, and safe. I'd like to thank
22 you, Chairwoman and the Committee for holding this
23 hearing today. And along with--as all the other
24 colleagues already said, I really do thank so much
25 the Council for their very longstanding commitment

1
2 to increasing all New Yorkers' access to healthy
3 and affordable foods. Really, CCC is so
4 appreciative at the work that this body has done
5 over the years.

6 I've submitted written testimony so
7 I'll be brief and summarize. And also, I do share
8 so many of the statements that my colleagues have
9 already so ably stated. CCC really is here today
10 just to share our strong support for this
11 resolution--passing an adequately funded farm bill
12 in which nutrition assistance programs are
13 protected is absolutely critical to New York City.
14 And you've heard from some of the other colleagues
15 today a few statistics, and also Councilwoman
16 Brewer's statements shared those at the beginning
17 as well, but just want to add a few more to flesh
18 out a little bit how many New York City children
19 will be affected because they and their families
20 rely on nutrition assistance programs.

21 So right now, 30% of New York City
22 children are living below the federal poverty
23 line, that's one in three New York City children.
24 Also, 30% of all New York City families with
25 children are relying on food stamps. And between

1
2 2007 and 2010, there was about a 53% increase in
3 the share of New York City families with children
4 who were turning to food stamps for help putting
5 food on their table. So we see the enormous
6 growth just over the course of the recession of
7 how many families with children need this help.

8 We also know from reports that
9 NYCCAH has put out in recent years that families
10 with children are showing up in even larger
11 numbers at emergency food providers, food
12 providers across all--emergency food providers
13 across all five boroughs have reported--and to use
14 the terms that were from NYCCAH's report--a great
15 increase in the number of families and children
16 who are utilizing their services.

17 So we really see how the things
18 that are contained in the Farm Bill pertaining to
19 nutrition assistance, especially food stamps, will
20 have such a large impact on our children and
21 families and, therefore, CCC is so pleased to see
22 the Council making such a strong statement in
23 favor of a farm bill that's adequately funded, in
24 support of a farm bill that not only supports food
25 stamps, but increases funding for food stamps.

1
2 We too, like the Council, are
3 pleased to see an increase in funding for TEFAP,
4 but as we say in our testimony and like Ms.
5 Stampas said earlier, that's the one thing that we
6 would respectfully suggest be changed in your
7 resolution is recognition that the funding is
8 simply not enough because of the proposed cuts to
9 food stamps and also because of the decrease in
10 funding that we saw just in the past year for
11 TEFAP funding.

12 But I'll just end by saying, you
13 know, we at CCC are very concerned with making
14 sure that people not just get the benefits to
15 which they're entitled to help feed their
16 families, but also that they be able to use them
17 in a variety of outlets in order to buy healthy
18 food for their families. And so we're very
19 pleased that the Council included in their
20 resolution an acknowledgment about the support for
21 the healthy food and financing initiative, and
22 also for the expansion of EBT use in farmer's
23 markets and CSAs, and that's something which we
24 really appreciate seeing. So we thank you for
25 this resolution, we thank you for your

1
2 longstanding efforts to try and help all New
3 Yorkers access healthy foods, and we hope to help
4 you in that endeavor. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Thank you all
6 for your testimony. Each one of you used the term
7 adequate. What does that mean?

8 JOEL BERG: I'll start. I've
9 calculated that we could entirely end hunger in
10 America for about \$35 billion in extra food
11 purchasing power for low income people. Now that
12 doesn't all have to be government funding, if we
13 have living wage ordinances that truly cover large
14 numbers of people, if we have minimum wage
15 increases, we can do some of that without extra
16 government funding. But let's say for the sake of
17 argument that it does cost America \$135 billion as
18 Ms. Stampas testified, the Center for America
19 Progress, where I am a senior fellow, has
20 calculated that hunger costs our country \$167
21 billion a year. Now if you're a homeowner and
22 there's a hole in your roof and a handywoman or
23 handyman comes to you and says I can fix that hole
24 for \$35, it costs you \$167, would you take the
25 deal? And I'd argue that America should take that

1

2 deal.

3

LOUISE FELD: Also, Senator

4

Gillibrand I believe supports increasing funding

5

so that the food stamp plan is done on the low

6

cost plan instead of the thrifty food plan--I hope

7

I'm saying that correctly. So, you know, there

8

needs--when we talk about adequate, we need to

9

talk about actually increasing the funding for

10

food stamps and for emergency food programs. So,

11

you know, I'm glad you asked that question 'cause

12

I think it is a good point of clarification that

13

to us what would be adequate is something that

14

really not just maintains these programs, but

15

expands them and provides greater funding for

16

them.

17

SANDRA JEAN-LOUIS: I mean, to echo

18

what other people have said, adequate means, you

19

know, making sure that people who need the food

20

are able to get it. So if we have 30% of New

21

Yorkers eligible for SNAP, or 1.4 million people

22

who are not receiving food stamps, not eligible

23

for it, not receiving it, and if we have children,

24

you know, one in six who basically do not have

25

enough food on their table, if we reduce the

1
2 amount of money, it's not going to increase the
3 number of people who are able to get, you know,
4 this service. So adequate means making sure that
5 everybody who is eligible have--making sure that
6 the funding remains available for those who are
7 eligible for the program.

8 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Council Member
9 Brewer?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes, two
11 questions. One is that this new coalition that,
12 Joel, you talked about, which is very exciting,
13 could you just expand on that a little bit?
14 Because obviously, we all in New York are very
15 jaded, we go to conferences where there are
16 millions of people interested in this issue,
17 always in Brooklyn, it seems, but, you know,
18 that's a cool borough too. And in addition, we're
19 very conscious of trying to make sure that as many
20 people as possible sign up for food stamps and,
21 obviously, lack of fingerprinting will help. So
22 we're going in this direction and, obviously, the
23 rest of Congress is going in the opposite
24 direction. So I'm just wondering how this
25 wonderful coalition is expanded or expanding

1

2 because the economic development is so clear to
3 me, but that doesn't seem to make any difference
4 in Washington.

5 JOEL BERG: A great question,
6 Councilwoman. Truth is the coalition needs a lot
7 of work. We don't have the power, we don't have
8 the money of the other forces, but the reality is
9 that the farm bill has basically been written by a
10 handful of, if I may say, you know, Midwestern
11 white men in a back room for decades, decades,
12 decades, and decades. In fact, the last member of
13 the House from New York City to be on the
14 Agriculture Committee was Shirley Chisholm, you
15 may know she was sent there as punishment by the
16 power structure and she got her revenge by having
17 an outside role shaping the modern food stamps
18 program in the seventies. The problem is for this
19 paradigm that if it ever saw the light of day,
20 this back room deal would come crashing down.

21 The one and only thing I agree with
22 under the sun with the Conservative Heritage
23 Foundation and the CATO Institute is opposing
24 these corporate agribusiness subsidies. People on
25 the left oppose them as corporate welfare, people

1
2 in the middle have opposed them as a fundamental
3 boondoggle waste of taxpayer money. If you looked
4 at editorials over the last ten years, probably 2%
5 of the editorials supported the current regime,
6 98% thought it was a horrible idea. So here you
7 have a system that's hated by the right, hated by
8 the left, hated by the center, hated by every
9 legitimate non-bought off, if I may say, expert
10 who has looked at this existing over and over and
11 over again. Why? Because we have not had a major
12 public debate, and that's why I'm so thrilled that
13 Council is injecting this into the public
14 dialogue.

15 So I think at every opportunity we
16 have to bring sunlight onto this, bring this out
17 of the back room, support Senator Gillibrand's
18 attempt to actually, goodness forbid, have a
19 debate on the floor of the United States Senate
20 about something that affects every state.

21 You know, the few states that send
22 the most people to Afghanistan aren't the only
23 ones where the senators get to vote on whether we
24 go to war, not like they usually vote on those
25 things. Why, a handful of states representing,

1
2 you know, 3% of the nation's population has
3 decided the entire policy of what we spend
4 billions of dollars on and whether our food is
5 safe for hundreds of millions of Americans is
6 beyond me.

7 So it's a tough road to haul to
8 change that coalition, but we desperately need to
9 do it.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you,
11 that makes it very clear, and I appreciate the
12 historic Shirley Chisholm reference, I did not
13 realize that it was way back then and I was around
14 then.

15 I just want to talk a little bit
16 about how--I know we talked about SNAP and food
17 stamps, but I'm also as interested as you are in
18 the locally sourced, and I'm just wondering how
19 this farm bill, if done correctly, might assist us
20 in locally sourced, which of course, incredibly
21 important to all the items that we've discussed.

22 MARGARET BROWN: So as you
23 mentioned in your opening statement and what we've
24 really seen is that New York state has the ability
25 to produce an amazing amount of food that can feed

1
2 New Yorkers and people in the region. And we're
3 lucky in New York to have a lot of small and new
4 farmers and a lot of people using careful
5 environmental practices, but much like Joel
6 mentioned, those people don't--I don't want to
7 make any blanket statements--but don't generally
8 receive a lot of subsidies from the Farm Bill, so
9 the programs you mentioned in the resolution, like
10 the Value-Added Producer Grant, which allows
11 people to make a lot more money off of their
12 product by keeping more of the dollar on the farm.
13 Things like that and any way to encourage the
14 economic viability of farmers in New York state is
15 really key to keeping local agriculture as
16 wonderful as we have it now and building it up
17 more.

18 JOEL BERG: I'd just say, in
19 addition to the Farm Bill, there are very vital
20 pending issues related to the agriculture
21 appropriations bill. Last year's budget agreement
22 slashed funding for the WIC Farmer's Market
23 program and the Senior Farmer's Market program.
24 What could be more motherhood and apple pie than
25 programs that help small farmers and have pregnant

1
2 women and infants and senior citizens get fresh
3 produce? Well apparently, this Congress, even
4 that's up for the slashing to pay for more tax
5 cuts for billionaires. So I would hope that the
6 Council also, you know, weighs on the agriculture
7 appropriations bill to make sure at least we don't
8 cut these programs at a time that should actually
9 be significantly increased.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you
11 very much. In our neighborhood, we just had a
12 meeting with the green market and all the senior
13 centers and the green market is going to produce
14 fresh for all of the Meals on Wheels and the
15 senior centers, but we have to do this all
16 locally, just imagine if we actually had support.

17 Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Well I think
19 everyone that testified gave the Council a lot of
20 credit on the work that the Council has done
21 around food access and nutrition citywide. I
22 think it's primarily a function of the advocacy
23 that you all do that helped to inform the policy
24 decisions that we take as a legislative body.

25 So thank you for being here and for

1

2

your testimony. And if there's no one else here

3

to testify, this hearing is adjourned.

4

[Gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Tammy Wittman, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature *Tammy Wittman*

Date June 15, 2012