

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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January 13, 2016
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Annabel Palma
Fernando Cabrera
Ruben Wills
Vanessa L. Gibson
Corey D. Johnson
Carlos Menchaca
Ritchie J. Torres
Barry S. Grodenchik

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

Lisa Fitzpatrick
Chief Program Officer and Director of Food Policy
Human Resources Administration

La Maunda Naharaj, Director
Emergency Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs
Human Resources Administration

Barbara Turk, Director
Food Policy
NYC Office of the Mayor

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

Lena Resnick, Public Affairs Manager
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

Loren Miller, Associate Vice President of Policy
United Way of New York City

Althea Cruz Marali (sp?)
Safety Net Activists and a Group supporter
Safety Net Project, Urban Justice Center

Emily Morano, Policy Analyst
Single Stop

Beatriz Diaz Tavares, Executive Director
Catholic Charities Community Services
New York Archdiocese

Ashley Rafalow
New York City Food Policy Center
Hunter Colleges

Nick Freudenberg,
New York City Food Policy Center
Hunter Colleges

Michael Czackes
Director of Public Policy and Public Affairs
Gay Men's Health Crisis, GMHC

Paul Carr
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Keith Carr, Manager
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City Harvest, Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn

Ariel Sarvansky, Policy Associate
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Patrick Jean-Baptiste
Masbia Soup Kitchen
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Lisa Levy, Director
Policy Advocacy and Organizing
New York City Coalition Against Hunger

Anthony Butler, Associate Executive Director
Saint John's Bread and Life

Agnes Momar
Community Food Advocates and
Representing Liz Accles, Executive Director

Anita Fein
St. Edward Food Pantry

Stuart Cohen
COJO, Staten Island,

Rashida Latef
West Side Campaign Against Hunger

[sound check, pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good morning

everybody. Thank you for your patience. I'm Council Member Stephen Levin Chair of the Council's General Welfare Committee We're joined today by our newest committee member, Barry Grodenchik. Welcome Mr. Grodenchik from Queens. Good everybody. I'm Chair Stephen Levin, Chair of the General Welfare Committee. Thank you very much for coming to today's important oversight hearing in which we will examine the state of hunger in New York City. Many New York City residents often do not have enough food to feed themselves and their families. Although the national and local economy has improved, the fact is that poverty remains very high in our city. According to the Center for Economic Opportunities' most recent research, poverty rates in New York City rose from 19% in 2008 to 21.5% in 2013. That's an increase from 2008 to '13. Poverty in the city has remained relatively unchanged since 2011. The annual study also reveals that nearly half, 45.1% of New York City residents are living near poverty, which his an increase from 41.1% in 2008. So what we're seeing is an increase in the percentage of New Yorkers both in

poverty and near poverty from 2008. As we are aware, unemployment can be a contributing factor of poverty. Even though the State's unemployment rate is at its lowest level since 2007 at 4.8%. The poverty rate among workers and their families has increased. The poverty rate for working age adults, persons 18 through 64 years of age who were employed full-time year round rose to 8.5% in 2013, an increase of 2.2% from 2008. And what that shows us is how bad wage stagnation is in our city. According to the latest New York City Food Metrics Report, more than 1.3 million New Yorkers are food insecure, and approximately 241 million meals were missed in a single year, which is also known as the meal gap. Furthermore, in 2012 to 2014 nearly half of all New York State and New York City residents who were food insecure were also employed according to a recent report from the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, again, another indication of wage stagnation in our city. As of November 2015, there are nearly 1.7 million SNAP participants in New York City. Between December 2012 and September 2015 SNAP participation in New York City dropped from approximately 1.9 million to 1.7 million, which is

about an 11% reduction. So while we have seen broadly poverty and near poverty growing up in New York City and intense wage stagnation, we have seen a decrease in the number of SNAP recipients. Since the SNAP took effect, the average SNAP benefit in New York City declined from \$162 per person from--in December 2012 to about \$148 per person per month in September 2015. In addition, food prices rose by more than 5%, higher than the overall rate of inflation. When you combine that with the cost of housing and the cost of living in New York City, and it paints a very distressing picture. According to a recent Food Bank survey in September 2015, 90% of food pantries and soup kitchens reported an increase in the number visitors. Nearly half reported that they have either run out of food or particular types of food, or had to reduce the number of meals in their pantry bags. More than one-third reported that they had turned people away. More than one-third of pantries and soup kitchens reported that they had turned people away. Because SNAP generally only provides enough benefits to last a family for three weeks out of a month, and give significant reductions of SNAP benefits, these entities provide

an essential service to help New Yorkers ensure that they can feed their families. The Human Resources Administration, HRA, is the entity charged with administering SNAP benefits. At the 2014 General Welfare hearing on hunger in New York City, HRA testified that it has taken several steps to improve New York City's residents' ability to access SNAP benefits. We look forward to hearing from HRA today on their progress. In May 2014, HRA accepted the Federal SNAP Waiver for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents, ABAWD. As of January 16, New York is among 19 states that no longer qualify for the ABAWD waiver in totality. It's--it's--it's--there's a new metric and we look forward to hearing from HRA on how they plan to address that. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that more than 500,000 and as many as one million individuals nationwide will lose SNAP eligibility over the course of 2015 including 60,000 veterans as a result of this action. At today's hearing, the Committee is interested in learning what improvements, if any, HRA has made to connect New Yorkers to food assistance, how the SNAP cuts have impacted HRA clients, and the agency's ability to serve them, and what the city can do to

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2 help fill the gaps and ensure that no individual in
3 New York City goes hungry. The committee is also
4 interested in hearing from the food pantry and soup
5 kitchen providers, and I would like to thank all of
6 the providers and all of the advocates who are here
7 today to testify and share with us their ideas on how
8 to improve the city's emergency food system. Before
9 we begin, I would like to thank my colleagues,
10 Council Member Barry Grodenchik of Queens, Council
11 Member Annabel Palma of the Bronx. I also want to
12 thank the General Welfare Committee staff Andrea
13 Vasquez, Counsel the committee; Tanya Cyrus, Policy
14 Analyst; and Dohini Sompura, Finance Analyst for
15 their work in preparing for this hearing today. I
16 now welcome Commissioner--I now welcome testimony
17 from--excuse me--HRA Chief Program Officer, Lisa
18 Fitzpatrick; Director of Food Policy from the Office
19 of the Mayor Barbara Turk; and HRA Director of
20 Emergency Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs, La
21 Maunda Maharaj. [pause] And before you begin, I'll
22 ask you to raise your right hands. Do you swear to
23 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the
24 truth today and to respond honestly to Council
25 Member's questions?

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2 PANEL MEMBER: [off mic] I do

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. You may
4 begin. Sorry, you have to turn on the microphone.

5 LISA FITZPATRICK: Okay. Good morning.

6 I thank Chairperson Levin and the members of the City
7 Council's General Welfare Committee for giving us
8 this opportunity to testify today. My name is Lisa
9 Fitzpatrick, and I am the Chief Program Officer for
10 the New York City Human Resources Administration. I
11 am pleased to be here today to discuss many of the
12 initiatives and programs that the de Blasio
13 Administration is undertaking to address food
14 insecurity. Additionally, I will focus on HRA's role
15 in ensuring that food assistance continues to be a
16 vital, easy accessible support for low-income
17 individuals and families. I am joined today by
18 Barbara Turk, the Director Food Policy in the Office
19 of the Mayor, and La Maunda Maharaj (sp?), the
20 Director of HRA's Emergency Food and Nutrition
21 Assistancess program. Hunger is a serious problem in
22 New York City. According to the City's 2015 Food
23 Metrics Report, 1.36 million New Yorkers, 16.5% of
24 New York's population were food insecure at some
25 point during 2013. Nearly one in five children

nationally, an estimated 15.8% or 49 million Americans were food insecure between 2013 through 2015. Food insecurity is a result of unemployment, underemployment, and low wages, and a consequence of growing income inequality. Chronic food insecurities has devastating effects for families and children. Children in food insecure homes are more likely to have poor academic performance, declining social skills, and are more likely to be overweight. Adults facing food insecurity have higher degrees of cardiovascular disease, higher risk factors for other chronic diseases and higher rates of maternal depression. The de Blasio Administration is addressing food insecurity head on, including the ongoing work to fight inequality through efforts such as raising the minimum wage and increasing the supply of affordable housing. At HRA, we are expanding and improving our employment and training opportunities so as to ensure that more clients gain economic security by obtaining low--long-term employment with a living wage and thereby moving our HRA's caseload and out of poverty. Additionally, through HRA's reforms to streamline enrollment and vastly increase outreach for the Federal Supplemental Nutrition

Assistance Program or SNAP, which was formerly known as Food Stamps, we are connecting more New Yorkers to critical safety net supports. Our goal is to ensure that every New Yorker who is eligible for SNAP can receive this crucial benefit. Currently, more than 1.7 million New Yorkers receive SNAP including more than 650,000 children. Of these, 1.7 million New Yorkers, more than 350,000 of them also receive cash assistance, a safety net for children and adults. Many SNAP recipients are employed, but their incomes are so low that they still qualify for SNAP. This is why the Mayor's call for an increase in the State minimum wage is essential to moving New Yorkers out of poverty and thereby minimizing the risk and collateral consequences of hunger and homelessness. In FY 15, SNAP recipients purchased more than \$3 billion in food generating about \$5.4 billion of economic activity in New York City largely within small businesses. For these low-income individuals and families' benefits such as SNAP-- For these low-income individuals and families, benefits such as SNAP can help with overall household budgeting and minimize the chances that these vulnerable New Yorkers will have to choose between buying food and

keeping a roof over their heads. SNAP benefits are a central component to what's re--what's required to resolve the problem of hunger. However, Congress' decision to decrease the amount of SNAP benefits coupled with increased food and living costs in New York City has placed a strain on many of our clients already stretched grocery budgets. We hear from many clients that they run out of SNAP benefits before the end of the month. This can be especially concerning during cold--during these cold winter days when clients are often forced to choose between things like heat and food. This is why the de Blasio Administration has been working for two years to implement both immediate and long-term measures to lift New Yorkers out of poverty. Among such efforts, HRA has taken concrete steps to ensure that those New Yorkers who qualify for SNAP receive the benefit. We continue to reduce bureaucratic barriers to access so that eligible New Yorkers can more easily apply for and obtain as well as recertify for SNAP benefits. We continue to work to optimize our systems, allowing clients to apply for benefits and programs online using ACCESS NYC, and late last year we rolled out a new application to enable SNAP clients to upload

eligibility documents from a mobile device. And finally, we have engaged in an outreach campaign with expanded efforts targeted towards seniors and immigrant communities. To summarize, HRA has undertaken a major effort to reduce barriers to access. These initiatives include:

1. Additional staffing. By restoring the headcount reduction that the prior administration instituted, we are able to improve service in HRA SNAP centers. The restoration includes 515 additional positions in 2015, and 361 positions by 2017.

2. New Improved Technology. In 2015, we expanded our ability to allow low-income city residents to obtain and retain SNAP. Improvements include launching and enhanced ACCESS NYC. ACCESS NYC is a website, which screens eligibility for over 30 city, state and federal benefit programs. We upgraded the system to make it possible not only to apply for SNAP online, but to submit a recertification for SNAP benefits. This new and improved website is accessible in English and in six Local Law languages: Arabic, Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Korean, Russian and Spanish.

3. Expanding self-service areas to aid additional SNAP centers. This means that there are now 13 SNAP centers and ten community based organizations where clients can quickly and easily submit required documentation--documents electronically. Clients can use the self-service areas to submit documentation in support of case changes such the addition or removal of a family member changing rent or address.

4. Providing PC terminals located in all but one of HRA's SNAP centers. Allowing clients to use the ACCESS NYC portal to complete and submit SNAP applications. The last center is scheduled to have this technology later this year.

5. Releasing the doc...mobile document upload application that allows clients to upload images of SNAP eligibility documents using a mobile device. HRA was awarded a \$1.5 million USDA Grant for this initiative, and since the application has launched, clients have uploaded more than 25,000 images. We believe--we firmly believe that mobile uploads and new internal systems will ensure documents are not lost upon submission clients. And finally, introducing just this month the on-demand

telephone interview option for SNAP recertification benefits. This new technology allows clients to complete their telephone recertification interviews at their own convenience.

6. Continuing Outreach Efforts. HRA's Office of Supplemental Assistance Nutrition Assistance Program Outreach Services, also known as SNAP OS, seeks educate---seeks to educate the general public about SNAP Benefits Eligibility Guidelines, pre-screens clients to determine potential eligibility and assists applicants with the application process. In Fiscal Year 2015, this unit provided outreach services at more than 1,500 individual community events. Understanding from day one that immigrants with legal status are one of the largest groups who qualify for, but are not enrolled in SNAP benefits under this administration, we have exponentially expanded our outreach services to immigrants and New Yorkers with limited English--English proficiency by partnering--partnering with 54 community-based human services and government organizations that have a proven track record of providing services to these groups. In addition, the Unit Manager's out station staff at three community

based paperless office system sites that provide online access to benefits and technical assistance to 101 community based organizations that provide SNAP facilitated enrollment and recertification services. Over the past year, the Office of SNAP Outreach Services pre-screened more than 10,200 potentially eligible applicants. In April, 2015, HRA launched an advertising campaign to encourage New Yorkers struggling to afford food to seek help, especially targeting low-income seniors and immigrants. At foodhelp.nyc. potential clients can find out if they qualify for more than 30 different HRA benefits. In addition to the website, the campaign consists of print advertisements in low--in English and six Local Law languages throughout the city in locations such as on buses--on subways, buses, and check cashing facilities, bodegas, et cetera. The campaign also includes digital advertisements and video testimonies of past or current clients, and the various marketing materials have been distributed to community partners by the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Department of Aging, and the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence. Multi-lingual marketing material was also distributed by HRA's own Community Affairs

and Emergency Intervention Services SNAP outreach teams. The Community Affairs Unit and the Mayor's Office at Senior Citizen's Rent Increase Exemption sign-up events, and at Deferred Action Citizenship events sponsored by the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. Within two months of the launch, the campaign website tracked an average of 128,062 unique visitors per day, and since its launch in April 2015, the website has received 177,642 page views.

The SNAP Ed Program is a federal program that provides nutrition education for SNAP participants and eligible individuals. While the SNAP program addresses food insecurity for low-income individuals, the goal of the SNAP Ed Program is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices with a limited budget and choose more physically active lifestyles.

Starting in 2000--in fiscal--fiscal year 2015, New York State's Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, OTDA, administered Snap Ed funding for numerous SNAP Ed programs and activities of the Cornell Cooperative Extension. SNAP Ed served 2,114,947 participants during FY14 including 251,737

direct education, and 1,863,210 indirectly through social media--media contacts and outreach events.

Through a partnership started in September 2014, HRA, the Robin Hood Foundation, the Benefits Data Trust and the New York City Department of Aging have committed to reaching and enrolling eligible seniors. Only 50% of seniors who are eligible for SNAP actually participate in the program. The lower participation rate among seniors is due to several barriers including limited mobility, lack of knowledge and supposed stigma associated with accepting government assistance. Employing BDT's proven model of targeted outreach and application assistances, using enrollment data for the five boroughs, and working with HRA to complement our outreach, the New York Benefits Center implemented a telephone and direct mail campaign for seniors who are not receiving SNAP. When seniors respond to this targeted outreach, highly trained staff from the New York Benefits Center guides through the process from start to finish, offering application assistance, document support and follow-up services. Since the start of the program in September 2014, this program has successfully mailed

141,500 outreach letters, conducted robo calls with a recorded message from Commissioner Banks to 98,669 households--669 households in conjunction with the mailing. Screened via telephone 27,855 households for SNAP; began SNAP applications for 12,596 households and submitted 11,076 applications on ACCESS NYC.

The Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety is a collaborative effort among NYCHA, 11 city agencies, community groups, and non-profits aimed at making New York City's neighborhoods and housing developments safer and stronger. As part of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety, HRA has an out--has launched an outreach initiative to assist NYCHA residents with information about benefits eligibility and how to access benefits for which they may be eligible. HRA now has outreach staff in all 15 NYCHA developments that were targeted as part of this program. Whether providing general information or HRA programs and services, assisting community residents with completing online applications for SNAP and public health insurance facilitating referrals to program officers or troubleshooting case concerns, our goal is the same, to provide support for New Yorkers in need.

In an effort to help clients close the gap in their food budgets, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has developed and distributed--distributed health bucks, which can be used to purchase fresh fruits and--fruits and vegetables at all farmer's markets. For every \$5.00 customers spend with their EBT card, they can receive a \$2.00 health buck, representing a 40% increase in their purchasing power. This initiative allows SNAP recipients to buy nutritious and affordable produce while--while supporting regional and local farms.

The City supports a wide range of services provided by food pantries and soup kitchens through HR--throughout HRA--I mean through HRA. In Fiscal Year 16, HRA's Emergency Food Assistance Programs total funding for food and administrative expense is \$14.1 million with a baseline of \$11.5 million. In addition to this \$11.5 million, there was a one-time addition of \$1.8 million in FY16, which was from the Administration to increase EFAP Funds. An additional \$800,000 was added from the New York City Council budget. While food distribution to those in need remains paramount, EFAP has also focused on setting a higher nutritional standard for

all foods that are provided to and distributed by the Emergency Food Network. Since 2008, EFAP requires all food purchased with City funding to be nutritious and meet sodium, sugar and trans fat standards. We aim to ensure that every New Yorker has a hot and healthy meal while also working to reduce the prevalence of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. In addition, HRA requires that all emergency food programs funded by EFAP provide SNAP outreach services. These services include SNAP eligibility pre-screening, assistance with SNAP application process and guidance on making healthy food choices.

HRA has worked with the Helmsley Charitable Trust, Redstone Strategy Group, the Director of Food Policy in the Mayor's Office and key New York City emergency food distributors to form the New York City Food Assistance Collaborative. The Collaborative aims to build capacity and increase food supply to some of the city's neighborhoods with the highest need for and the less access to emergency food. This group also seeks to improve data sharing and food distribution throughout the entire emergency food network. Finally, HRA continues to work with

New York City Services reducing service--Reducing Hunger Service Initiative to assess and meet the skills based volunteer needs of the Emergency Food Network, soup kitchens and food pantries. This initiative includes engaging the network and expand its SNAP outreach services with the assistance of volunteers.

SNAP and the Emergency Food Assistance Program, as well as--as well as other initiatives detailed in this testimony have and will continue to provide necessary assistance to low-income New Yorkers. But more remains to be done to ensure that every New Yorker has access to nutritious and healthy food. In May 2014, we accepted a waiver which allows single adults--Single Able-Bodied Adults, also known as Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents or, or ABAWDs, who are--who are under--unemployed or underemployed to receive SNAP when they could not find more than 80 hours of work per month. Waivers are allowed for areas with high unemployment. New York State has been covered by a waiver, but the--but the improved economy means that all areas still qualify. We are working with the Federal Department of Agriculture and the New York State Office of

Temporary and Disability Assistances to extend the waiver in New York City even though New York State no longer has a statewide waiver because the unemployment rate has decreased.

This--this Administration continues to work to expand access to these essential benefits, and while the long-term solutions are clear, we must also continue to implement near-term solutions to ensure that few low-income New Yorkers and their families are impacted by food insecurity. When New Yorkers can earn a living wage and find affordable housing, they will have the ability to obtain the food they need to prevent hunger. We must not lose sight of the bigger goals needed to fundamentally address hunger and income inequality, which is why this Administration is implementing a plan to create or preserve 200,000 units of affordable housing and setting the example for state and other localities by raising the minimum wage for 50,000 city workers. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much, Ms. Fitzpatrick. I want to welcome Council Member Brad Lander to the hearing as well. Ms. Maharaj or Ms. Turk, do you have testimony or--?

BARBARA TURK: [off mic] I don't.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, thank you. So I want to start off. I'll ask about the--the situation with the ABAWD Waiver. Um, what is the current status then of individuals have that have-- the started receive SNAP benefits as a receive SNAP benefits as a result of the ABAWD Waiver are they currently able to receive benefits as of today.

LISA FITZPATRICK: Um, the current status is that individuals can continue to receive benefits until they exhaust three months within a 36-month period without meeting the AABAWD requirements. The first month begins this month in January 2016. New York State OTDA sent out letters to affected ABAWDs notifying them of the requirements, and we are prepared to assist them with finding employment by engaging service with an employment vendor. But we're still waiting to hear back from the State about several requests that have been set up--sent up to the federal government to waive the requirement.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So the request from HRA regarding city residents has to go to-- um, the Federal Department of Agriculture has to then go through OTDA?

2 LISA FITZPATRICK: It has to go through
3 OTDA, yes correct.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And does OTDA have--
5 and--and I'm just asking about the process. So, um,
6 the--the Department of Agriculture, the Federal
7 Department of Agriculture can extend the waiver for
8 New York City itself out. And what was the threshold
9 in terms of unemployment? We're down to 4.8%. Is--
10 is--is it a--is it a trend or is it something--what
11 is the--where's the criteria?

12 LISA FITZPATRICK: So, um, the--the
13 current requirement, um, in our conversations with
14 the State would mean that only a certain portion of
15 the city would be subject to the ABAWD requirements.
16 Unemployment is not as high in the Borough of
17 Manhattan as it is other parts of the city. So if we
18 are not able to negotiate changes through the state,
19 then there are residents in the Borough of Manhattan
20 only who would be affected by the ABAWD requirements.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, so then outside
22 of the Borough of Manhattan the waiver would still
23 apply?

24 LISA FITZPATRICK: That is correct.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. Um, now
3 obviously there--this would be going, um, zip code by
4 zip code or how would they--how would they identify
5 areas in the Borough of Manhattan where somebody
6 could or could not qualify?

7 LISA FITZPATRICK: So New York State
8 submitted a request to the feds to examine
9 unemployment by zip code, and that was recently
10 turned down. We just learned that this morning from
11 OTDA. So we're still negotiating what the rules would
12 exactly. But it looks like that people below 95th
13 Street and I think it's below West 110th Street in
14 Manhattan may be affected by the ABAWD requirements.
15 So it would not even be the entire borough of
16 Manhattan, but it could be certain areas within the
17 Borough of Manhattan. So all of this makes it
18 extremely difficult for us to think about how we will
19 operationalize and communicate this information to
20 our clients.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That's very
22 problematic obviously and shows I think a lack of
23 understanding of--of the economic realities of New
24 York City, um, for the federal government for one
25 thing to not understand that there are obviously

pockets of poverty in every zip code in New York City including below 96th Street in Manhattan. And that, um, just painting people with a single brush seems just entirely inappropriate on top of the fact that the cost of living in New York City for a multitude of reasons is--is--is much higher than--than the other localities. And, in fact, makes it--You know, then--then people that are living in poverty or near poverty in Manhattan living--living below 96th Street get hit doubly because they a higher cost of living, living in Manhattan, and then getting punished for--for--for living where they live. So, any assistance that this committee and this Council can give, we are--we are more than happy to helping to organize around that.

LISA FITZPATRICK: Well, thank you very much. There are certain exclusions that we can utilize to prevent clients from being subject to the ABAWD requirements, but the exclusions are limited to only 1,500 clients per month. So households--clients that live in New York City Housing Authority, clients that have any type of earned income or unearned income we're looking to use those exemptions for. But it would be more problematic if we had to use the

2 exempt--the exclusions instead of waiving the
3 requirements for all city residents.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, and do you
5 have a--a sense of how many, um, for example
6 veterans, um, would be affected if this were to go
7 into effect?

8 LISA FITZPATRICK: So we don't have the
9 date of today by veterans, but I think we can get
10 that to you.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I mean that
12 would be obviously a--a real shame and a travesty if
13 there were to impact veterans' ability to receive
14 SNAP benefits.

15 LISA FITZPATRICK: Right.,

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, I--I want to ask
17 just about the larger picture. As I--as I said, in--
18 in my opening statement and you spoke to in your
19 testimony, um, the economic picture for New Yorkers
20 is somewhat, um, complicated in that we have seen the
21 decrease in the unemployment rate. Um, but we have
22 seen an increase or a, um, a plateauing of the number
23 of--the amount--the percentage of New Yorkers living
24 in poverty or living near poverty. Um, and--and at
25 the same time we've seen a decrease--a significant

decrease. I think it's 11% in the enrollment in the--in the enrollment of SNAP recipients. Can--can you--what do you think is the reason for a de--the--the--the decrease that we've seen, such a significant, um, percentage decrease, um, in SNAP recipients in light of the fact that we see either a leveling off or an increase in the--in the percentage of New Yorkers living at or near--or near poverty?

LISA FITZPATRICK: So, we've been examining this issue to try to determine why there has been a decrease, and it seems that the reduction in benefits by the federal government is probably one of the largest reason for why there has been a decrease in SNAP participation. Minimum wage has recently increased and for many of our families, once you get an increase in--in income, you may no longer qualify for SNAP, but that does not mean you still have the ability to pay your rent and other expenses. So the fact that the benefit is reduced from prior years really does affect people's decision to come in and apply for assistance.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

LISA FITZPATRICK: We have expanded outreach and expanded online access to make it less

of a hassle for people to access benefits, but people still do make that decision when they look at what the economic gain is from receiving SNAP grant. If it's not significant and we would think an extra \$20 or \$30 a month would still be significant--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Uh-huh.

LISA FITZPATRICK: --but when they determine that, you know, it's not enough for them to go through the hassle of applying, then they just choose not to. So we've done a lot to try to expand outreach through online applications, telephone interviews. And as I said in my testimony, we just recently introduced on-demand telephone interviews for re-certifications, and that's been done in Staten Island this month. But we are planning to expand that to application activity into other boroughs at some point.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, can you give an assessment of--of how the--those efforts have been working, how effective they are in terms of, um, um, getting new enrollment of, um, reaching individuals and families that could qualify for SNAP benefits that aren't currently enrolled? If you were to--I guess one--one way to look at it is if you could

compare, um, your--the new enrollment numbers from say the last six months of 2013 versus the last six months of 2015. So that would be, you know, under the prior administration and then, you know, under this administration where a lot of the--the new programs were already, um, in--instituted.

LISA FITZPATRICK: Yes, that's something that we can get for you. We don't have that data here today, but we'd be happy to provide that to you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, more generally, which programs have been very effective and which ones do you believe, um, are--are less effective or could--could be improved?

LISA FITZPATRICK: Um, which initiatives?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, which initiatives.

LISA FITZPATRICK: So we've, um, also instituted robo calls to our clients to remind them of appointments and, um, we have a rescheduling unit. So if they are--if they are not able to keep their appointment, they can call and reschedule those appointments. And we're finding that having individuals in those telephone interviews are more effective and helpful than having to take time off

from work to come in to apply or to recertify for assistance. The telephone window--the telephone interviews are particularly problematic for our clients because they have to wait about four interview for the interview process, and we're hoping--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] The in-person interviews?

LISA FITZPATRICK: This is the telephone interviews.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The telephone interviews.

LISA FITZPATRICK: Yeah, the telephone interviews. So with the exception of the pilot that we're running in Staten Island at this point, the rest of the city if you have an interview you have to wait for an HRA employee to call you for that interview. And so what we're finding is because it takes about four hours for our clients to wait to get a telephone interview, then often times the interviews just wind up being rescheduled. And once we switch to this on-demand environment, we're confident that more people will actually be able to

2 keep those interviews and certain and apply--and
3 certify for assistance.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, and what--the
5 plan is to expand that citywide?

6 LISA FITZPATRICK: Right so we just
7 started, um, this month in Staten Island and that's
8 only for cases with an active, um, um, SNAP case. So
9 that's for recertification.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Recertification?

11 LISA FITZPATRICK: Right. So we want to
12 expand, um, to other boroughs after we evaluate
13 what's happening in--

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing]
15 Starting with recertification and--

16 LISA FITZPATRICK: Starting with
17 recertification, because those are individuals who we
18 know the recertification population. SO it's a
19 little bit easier for us to analyze the call patterns
20 for the research. But once we open it up to the
21 application interviews, then, you know, it'll--it
22 might be a much higher volume, and we want to make
23 sure that we have sufficient staff poised and ready
24 to handle the cases for the applicants.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And--and the--the
3 on-demand telephone interview option currently
4 entirely supplants the need for an in-person, um,
5 recertification interview?

6 LISA FITZPATRICK: That is correct. The
7 on-demand telephone interview supplants the need for
8 an in-person interview and you no longer have to wait
9 sitting by a phone for an HRA employee to call you
10 for an interview. So this part--

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] So how
12 does it work? Somebody picks up the phone and
13 there's a--there's somebody there?

14 LISA FITZPATRICK: You call us at your
15 convenience. When you're ready to have your
16 interview, you pick up the phone. Between 8:30 a.m.
17 and 5:00 p.m. you call us and you can have your
18 interview.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, how many--what's
20 the staffing, though, for this service right now?

21 LISA FITZPATRICK: Um, so for this
22 initial rollout I think we have 10 people who are
23 manning the phones and, you know, it just started
24 this month in January and it's been--it's been very
25 successful, and clients who do participate in the on-

demand telephone interview, they are actually really happy really happy about it because it gives them more control over their benefits and the applicant-- the recertification process.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is the goal to expand this--this--this citywide for recertification and then expand it beyond recertification to initial-- initial certification?

LISA FITZPATRICK: That's correct. So we start off in Staten Island. We research the next borough we want to try a location in the Bronx with recertification just to get a feel for the call volume and how many people we would have to put on the telephones. And then, at some point in the future we would expand it to the applications.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I want to just ask a quick question about staffing. So you said in your testimony earlier that the current administration has restored, um, 515, um, positions thus far with 361, um, in 2017. Um, where are those positions located within the agency?

LISA FITZPATRICK: So those positions are within the SNAP program. Those are the SNAP eligibility staff and the supervisors.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So they would--they
3 would be handling certification, recertification?

4 LISA FITZPATRICK: Right and when we say
5 restore it, um, there was a planned cut of those
6 positions--

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay.

8 LISA FITZPATRICK: --but we didn't
9 actually lose those positions, but there was a
10 planned cut that was going to be put in place, and
11 Commissioner Banks was able to restore the positions
12 so we didn't have to worry about losing those staff
13 to attrit--to attrition.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That was a--a--a peg,
15 an out year peg by the--

16 LISA FITZPATRICK: [interposing] That is
17 correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --previous
19 administration?

20 LISA FITZPATRICK: Yes, yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And that was because
22 they thought that technology was going to make those
23 positions unnecessary? Is that--or what would--I
24 don't--if you would care to characterize the previous
25 administration's reasoning.

LISA FITZPATRICK: It was linked to the technological improvements, but unfortunately, some of the changes that were anticipated didn't happen in the time frame in which, um, the peg was introduced. So I think once we get more of these initiatives off the ground we're actually doing rather well with the technological improvements, but there's still a lot of work that needs to be done. And we absolutely do need to maintain the staff on hand currently.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, since you were speaking of--of borough by borough, do you have a breakdown of SNAP recipients by borough?

LISA FITZPATRICK: Yes, we do. We can provide that to you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Do you have it on hand right now?

LISA FITZPATRICK: I do not. I don't think so.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, and, um sorry, but even a bigger picture than that, how many SNAP recipients in New York City currently?

LISA FITZPATRICK: There's over 1.7 million SNAP recipients in New York City, and that

includes those individuals who in receipt of cash assistances as well as the SNAP only cases.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And are we seeing a month-over-month increase or decrease or leveling off-of applications for new SNAP recipients?

LISA FITZPATRICK: So the application volume has not picked up for SNAP applicants. The percentage of SNAP applicants not--not previously known to HRA tends to be between 15 and 17%, and that hasn't changed over the last few months. I know you asked about that going back to 2013, but--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yeah.

LISA FITZPATRICK: --I don't have that at this point. So, we're--we're not finding droves of new people not known to the system coming in. What we are finding is that there is a growth in the number of people who are getting both SNAP and cash assistance.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, what--what, um, metrics or what--how are evaluating performance of--so there's a lot of--obviously a lot of new programs and I think maybe cumulatively, um, they're having an--an impact that's--that is able to be measured, but how are you able to determine or measure, um,

any--any particular initiative, um, any particular initiative's impact?

LISA FITZPATRICK: Um, we're working on evaluating these initiatives to see just exactly what impact they are having on, um, the participation rates. When we looked at the data concerning the robo calls, we really could not see where it really prevented clients from having cases closed, or encouraging them to keep appointments. And it doesn't--it seems counterintuitive that I know that if I get a call from my dentist, I go to my appointment. So, we felt that the robo calls would really help to drive clients to keep their appointments, and that's not really what we've been seeing in the evaluation. But I think it's still too soon to tell, and we're going to move to text messaging as well because with the robo calls, um, we find that many times people don't recognize the telephone number, and they just won't answer the phone. So, we're going to give clients the ability to opt into a text message--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Uh-huh.

LISA FITZPATRICK: --from HRA, and then perhaps that would help to, you know, drive behavior.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: As appealing as it is
3 to get a call from Commissioner Banks [laughter] um,
4 um, do you--actually this is--I don't mean to be
5 facetious here, but do--is--is--I--I know that there
6 are six languages, the six Local Law languages, um,
7 does--is--is there a call that goes--how is that
8 matched in terms of primary language?

9 LISA FITZPATRICK: So, the call is based
10 on, um, the language spoken and it's matched. It
11 goes out in English and in the language spoke. Um,
12 it--because it's both languages, the call can be a
13 little bit longer--

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Uh-huh.

15 LISA FITZPATRICK: --than necessary, but
16 we didn't want to default only to the language spoken
17 as indicated in our systems, just in case--

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yes.

19 LISA FITZPATRICK: --somehow or another
20 we got it wrong. So we just wanted to make sure that
21 we did have the English plus the--the language spoken
22 as is indicated.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And Commissioner
24 Banks isn't speaking the other language?

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2 LISA FITZPATRICK: NO, I don't think he
3 is. No. [laughs]

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, I'm--I'm going to
5 turn it over to my colleagues for some questions.
6 Then I'll come back. Um, and we've been joined by
7 Council Member Carlos Menchaca of Brooklyn. Um,
8 Council Member Grodenchik.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
10 Mr. Chairman. The restoration of the 876, um, SNAP
11 eligibility workers, how many additional workers are
12 there doing this work for the City of New York in
13 addition to those 876?

14 LISA FITZPATRICK: I--I don't have that
15 information on me right now, but do you want to know
16 how many workers are in the SNAP Program doing
17 eligibility--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: [interposing]
19 It seems like an awful lot of people. I mean it's--
20 it's about one for every 9,000 New Yorkers, which is--
21 -

22 LISA FITZPATRICK: [interposing] Yeah,
23 it's well over--I think it's like 1,200 at least.
24 Yeah, yeah about--over 1,200 employees.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay, um--

2 LISA FITZPATRICK: [interposing] And we
3 can get you the--the exact number if you need it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay. Thank
5 you for that. I would appreciate that information.

6 LISA FITZPATRICK: Uh-huh.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: You mentioned
8 in your testimony that, um, you had partnered with 15
9 NYCHA developments. Is there a reason it's only 15?
10 That's less than 5% of the total number of NYCHA
11 developments. There are 328 in the city. It seems
12 like--are we working with--I grew up in Pomonok
13 Houses, which is a NYCHA development. When you had a
14 problem, you went to the local neighborhood center
15 where there were people not necessarily city
16 employees, but they would help you fill out your
17 forms. I'm wondering do we work with every NYCHA?
18 Are we only working with 15? Is there a--a
19 disconnect here or--?

20 BARBARA TURK: Yeah, this is part of the
21 MAP Initiative that the Mayor announced, um, back in
22 2014 after the summer when the two young children
23 were hurt and one was killed in an--in an elevator.
24 Um, and the Mayor asked the Office of Criminal
25 Justice Coordinator to think about what we could do--

and all of his agencies to think about what we could do to improve safety in NYCHA. And that because a--a set of 15 neighborhoods based initiatives. NYCHA is one of the partners. It doesn't mean that HRA is ignoring--by far that is not true I would say--that HRA is ignoring other--other developments, but it's part of a set of focused efforts on the 15 developments that were identified as having the highest rates of felonies in those developments.

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: So it really grew out of a public safety issue as opposed to a hunger issue?

BARBARA TURK: In that--in that particular case, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay. Um, my last question, Mr. Chairman, um, I noticed under the Emergency Food Assistance Program, the--the \$14.1 million is that the total sum that we are providing for emergency food assistance in the--in the city?

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ The budget of the Emergency Food Assistance Program is actually used for food and administrative grants, which actually gives the programs support for non-food related expenses.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: But that's
3 the total number?

4 LISA FITZPATRICK: [pause] Yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: And can you
6 provide us with a list of who is receiving that money
7 which agencies, which--I assume it's going to not-
8 for-profits most of the money minus the
9 administrative costs.

10 LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ To emergency food
11 programs and soup kitchens that are being funded by
12 it.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: [interposing]
14 Do you have a list of those with you today?

15 LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ Not at time, but I can
16 get them.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: [interposing]
18 Can you send them to the Chairman so he can
19 distribute it to the committee members?

20 LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ Yes, we can.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: And that's--
22 it seems--I--I just want to make a statement, Mr.
23 Chairman, it seems an appallingly low figure for a
24 city of 8.4 million people. It's--it's about \$1.60
25 per person. [applause] And if you take the--I mean

my math--my wife is the math professor in the family, but, um, when you take the number of restorations at 876 at a--at the \$15 minimum wage, with fringe that the mayor and all of us appreciate, that's about \$40 million a year we're spending there and we're spending less than 30%, about 30% of that with direct support. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much, Council Member Grodenchik. I--I would also just, um, mention that under the previous administration, you know, we had this peg concept that we had to deal with every November and January, um, where, um, you know, these--these programs as appallingly low as it is now was--was always, you know, kind of under attack, um, seemingly and, um, and so, I'm with you on that, and---

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: [off mic] I appreciate that and I appreciate, but we need to--we need to raise the numbers of we can. (sic)

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Absolutely. Agreed. [applause] Thank you very much, Council Member Grodenchik. Council Member Lander.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you, Mr. Chair for convening this important, um, hearing, and

as we do this around Thanksgiving that I'm glad we stayed focused on it, and even though Thanksgiving came and went you are still gathering us together and--and hearing this, and thanks to you for being here. Um, so I want to talk a little bit more about the SNAP eligibility, and--and getting that--those numbers up. And so, I'm going to start by understanding how we estimate sort of the universe of eligibility and the percent of people who are enrolled. Part of the challenge here is, you know, the number of enrollees is down substantially from where it was in 2012. And, of course, some of that's a good thing. Those are folks who--some of those are folks who are working. The economy is better, and so they're less likely to need SNAP. But it--it feels a little like we don't really know. We don't--we're not able to track our-- Well, I guess let it ask you this. If we knew how many people were eligible and how many people were enrolled, and we could track how we were doing as a percentage of how many eligible New Yorkers eligible for SNAP are getting it. And even as that went up and down because some people became ineligible because they got better jobs, we would know whether we were moving forward or

backward. Do we have any way of do--but it seems a little like we're kind, you know, shooting in the dark a little. We know there was that reduction from 1.79 to 1.7 million. We think much of that is due to the improvements in the economy, but on the other hand we don't really know how our outreach efforts are going. Are we reaching a higher percentage of eligible New Yorkers or not? Is that right that we don't-- It--it seems like we don't really have good information on how many New Yorkers are eligible, and of those what percentage are getting?

LISA FITZPATRICK: [background comments]

[laughs]

BARBARA TURK: Okay. [pause] I mean, you're--you're--you're correct in saying that it is hard especially with numbers this large to figure out in every case. We don't--you know, as you heard it's hard enough for us to get people in for recertification. We're probably not doing the level of information collecting about--about people going on and off as we--we--we might if we were directing resources in that--in that fashion. I think, you know, it's--I--I want to underline what, um, Deputy Commissioner Fitzpatrick said earlier, though, which

is that, um, we do have a pretty good idea more than anecdotally that people are coming off not only because they get jobs, but because if you are getting--your benefit was cut, and you were going through what has been a very challenging process. And your benefit is now say \$18 and you're a senior, we know that we're probably losing you. Are we counting that in every, you know, in a systematic way or not.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: We have done a survey--we--we--that's--that is--we--we're currently--we have done a survey? Was there a survey of people who didn't renew?

BARBARA TURK: The help that we're getting has been the help that we've asked for, which is help in doing targeted outreach to populations that we know are being underserved by this--by the Food Stamp Program, because it goes with the--

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing] So I guess let me ask a little bit about this with the seniors obviously you--you were able to target. How did you identify the universe of seniors that you believed were eligible, but not receiving this, you know, benefits?

2 BARBARA TURK: This was the--that's the
3 process that you guys were--I think it was the--the
4 BDT fund.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Yeah.

6 LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ So, with the BDT
7 model--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing]
9 BDT, I'm sorry.

10 LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ --what we've done is
11 we've actually, um, done a match for those New York
12 City residents that were receive Medicaid 60 and over
13 that were not enrolled in SNAP, and that's how we
14 identified that particular pool.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay. So that
16 100 and I'm trying to find the numbers in your--
17 Heavens, I'm using your testimony as my notes. Um,
18 so you--the 141,500 outreach letters that came from a
19 universe of people receiving Medicaid who weren't on
20 SNAP, and then you followed up with them in the ways
21 outlined here?

22 LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And are there
24 other places where you're able to do that? You know,
25 things like, you know, are there matches of that type

where you can build a universe? How good can we make our universe of eligible, but non-SNAP recipient New Yorkers?

LISA FITZPATRICK: And so I think that one of the issues is that we that we've done matches before. We've done matches against the Medicaid file to see if these individuals were receiving SNAP benefits. And, you know, we've done outreach mailers to them, but the disconnect is actually getting people to follow up on the mail that goes to them. So with the Benefits Data Trust Initiative, you have a targeted group who's reaching, um, senior only. So of the entire crowd of Medicaid eligible individuals, you have subset of that, which are the seniors. And BDT is focusing particularly on the seniors because we know that they tend to have a fixed income, and that they are more likely to meet the immigration standards for food stamps as well as have a lower source of income. The entire Medicaid file, there could people who don't have the appropriate citizenship status or might have a income, and income that disqualifies them for SNAP, but then still would make the Medicaid eligible. But what we're looking at particularly now that we have this new age of

technology where people are applying for benefits online, is we're looking at a process where people could actually apply for health insurance and also initiate an application for SNAP. We've asked the State if they would this and, of course, with the Health Exchange they have a lot of priorities on their plate. But they said they were more than willing to allow HRA to move forward with that. So it's really about getting the technology to catch up with all these ideas because it seems to be like the right thing to do. If you're there applying for health insurance, then you should be able to apply for medical insurance. And in our preliminary conversations about this, we know it would take a significant, a significant amount of resources in order to make this technological change within ACCESS NYC. It is something that that we are thinking it's a good idea to do. But more importantly we have workers who go out, homecare workers and I think this actually came up in 2014 when the Commissioner testified. We have workers that go out to see Medicaid recipients, and they have been able to and should be able to make sure that they're filing a SNAP application. So, actually looking at which HRA

workers are connecting with our clients, and then making sure with that personal touch they were able to try to encourage them. We can't force anyone to file an application. But what we wanted to do is make it as easy as possible. If we have that information in on the Medicaid side where we know what your household composition is, what certain expenses are. Then we want the client to initiate just tell us that we can use that information to generate a SNAP application for you--for you. So, we want it to be as seamless possible.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, just following up-- Go ahead.

BARBARA TURK: No, I was just going to say--so the strategy has been was about can we get an actual concrete number? It's been more about let's take all of the different ways that we could--we are as a city, um, are in--in conversation, you know, in this much more personal way, um, to try to offer the opportunity of, you know, getting on SNAP if that would help people. And so, HHC has an initiative that's doing--that--that is starting now we're in pediatric--some of the pediatric clinics we're starting to ask people what their, you know, other

social determinants of health are, and one is could you--could you use some help with food? And people will tells us, and sometimes they'll say yes, we'd actually like to apply for--for SNAP. We'd like you to help with that. Sometimes they'll say no, but we would like to know where our nearest food pantry or soup kitchen is. The food pantries and soup kitchens I cannot say enough about how--what a great job they do with SNAP enrollment, which is again these are friendly folks who people know and trust. And sometimes that makes a huge difference in whether people will apply or not?

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Yes.

BARBARA TURK: So there's much more going on here than just--

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: [interposing]
No, so let me be clear. It's clear to me from your testimony, what you've said and the things that I know you're doing that you're doing a--a great deal, and that was like everything you can think of to keep increasing it. So, the question isn't are you working hard? The question is do we have a good tool for evaluating how that's going, and I understand why it's complicated I'll be honest. It sounds like for

a range of sensible reasons we really don't when the enrollment is down, but as we've said that's for a range of understandable reasons related to the economy. Looking at the BDT, you know, it was a-- it's a--depending on you measure it, it's kind of a low, you know, of the universe of people we started with, a much smaller set of people got enrolled. That makes sense also. None of that is reflective of are we trying everything we can? But, so it might, you know, you could imagine it would be great to do all those things, and also have some way of sort of estimating the percent of enrollees we've got and is it increasing? I--I--so I was just trying to-- So, um, one or two more, um, questions here. Um, one thing like the--the biggest enrollment effort that this administration has engaged in, in the last two years was for Pre-K. Right, that was an enormous, um, effort to like-- That was like let's everyone resource we have in making sure that everyone who's eligible knows about it and--and no we can't make anyone do it, but we--we sure didn't stop at like let's just make sure they heard about it once. And I just wonder whether you've, um, you know, had a chance to compare notes with that outreach and

enrollment effort. You know, so like if the Mayor said we'd like to be as aggressive at getting every eligible SNAP recipient in SNAP as we were at getting every eligible Pre-K recipient enrolled in Pre-K. What would that look like? What would we do? What would that tell-- How much--how many resources would that take? Um, it looks like no let me encourage you to compare notes with. I mean it would be useful to know. We learned like they did a pretty good job, and we spent a lot of money and time and energy well worth it. I think it might be worth, you know, seeing if they were doing some things that might be eligible--you know that might make sense to do here as well. And, you know, volunteers go door to door. I--you know, there was a lot of things done, and I think it would be useful to compare notes. My last, um, question, and I'll let you go on. Um, it just comes back to, um, in fact, and I certainly want to associate myself with Council Member Grodenchik's, um, words. But it--it sounds like given the reduction in SNAP benefits that EFAP has had to come to play a bigger role, um, that it looks like a lot of those folks who are actually enrolled in SNAP, and maybe got enrolled from going to a food pantry. Now,

their benefits don't go as far as they used to, and so EFAP which used to maybe be adding just a little bit, now has to do more, but we haven't increased the resources to enable it to do more. Have--have we--so that's not just like we'd like to give EFAP a little more money. That's do we under--if EFAP is needed to do something more and bigger, if that's how we are trying to backfill for the federal government's unconscionable cuts to SNAP, are we thinking about that? Like have we looked at EFAP to try to think about whether we need to make it a bigger gap filler in response to the SNAP cuts, and how we would--how we would resource that and what it would look like?

BARBARA TURK: Yes, I think the answer is yes. Um, and we have a--a budget process coming up, and we have been doing an enormous amount of work in the last year to figure this out and figure out. Rather than just kind of pull a number out of the air, how we could be thoughtful, and targeted and how we might, um, boost the amount of EFAP money that's available out there. Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Great. It sounds like I shall--we'll, we'll look forward to seeing--

2 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] To be
3 continued.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: --the
5 preliminary--

6 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] To be
7 continued.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: --budget--

9 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] To be
10 continued.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And I'm hoping
12 that this is something that might be addressed
13 better. So thank you very much for your testimony.
14 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much
16 Council Member Lander. Council Member Carlos
17 Menchaca.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you,
19 Chair, and, um, I--I wanted to just drill down a
20 little bit on the outreach, and the new efforts for
21 our immigrant community, and the testimony and our
22 research kind of shows that there's a--there is a new
23 opportunity to engage our immigrant community
24 especially those after the last two years of bringing
25 so many millions of dollars or legal services to our

immigrant communities' status is now, um, a--an opportunity that many of our New Yorkers have taken. So, um, can you talk a little bit more about how you're measuring that success and outreach to our growing members who are now eligible? How are you measuring the success? And I know--I know, um, Council Member Lander is kind of pointing to the big--the bigger question, but if there's anything that you're using that's a little bit different?

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: So, I'm not--I'm not so sure that I can actually, um, give you the metrics that are used to measure it, but I can tell you about the different initiatives that we--that we are, um employing, and we do feel that they have been successful. We work very closely with the Mayor's Office on Immigrant Affairs to engage in--with their Right to Know forums as well as we've had some recent conversations with some of the consulate offices in order to, um, be able to reach out to specific targeted, um, populations. We also, as was said was in the testimony, we have, um partnered with over 54 community-based organizations throughout New York City that primarily service immigrant populations. And so, what we have seen is that there is, um, more

of a, um, confidence with--with the population to come and engage us at these community-based organizations because it's in a setting that they're more familiar with.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: And out of the organization conversations in these forums, are these typically kind of passive, um, relationships where you're kind of just giving information. And I--so I've been to many of those forums as well especially in the district. Um, and I think as far as I've kind of seen it's just been hey here are all the other things that you can--you can connect with. Um, as far as--is--is there a kind of a robust outreach effort that--that you're initiating with organizations?

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: So it depends on the individual events. At some events we're asked to only come there in order to provide eligibility information, but in more times than not we have subsequent events where we're able to actually sit down and do application assistance.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Great. And so that's what I was hoping that you would say, and--and I think that's what we need to see more of is...is as

they sit down to get their appointment for IDNYC and they return to another event that they've already say signed up for the ID, they can sit down for a couple other, um, sign-up sessions. And so I'm--I'm encouraging that as part of the outreach team and we can kind of pilot that in say Sunset Park or Red Hook. Um, I want to now talk a little bit about the--the kind of--maybe a fuller picture about the benefits and the increased outreach you're having, um for--for the community, and it's one thing to kind of put, you know, purchasing power in the hands of people. In--in my district, and actually this affecting both Council Member Lander and I. There was a grocery store that just recently closed. Pathmark and Pathmark is having citywide problems.

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: So as--as grocery stores close, is there an effort, a strategy effort with other agencies like EDC, Department of City Planning to really think about how we bring people, um, closer to buying options or options to purchase, um, affordable food? And--and is that part of your strategy?

BARBARA TURK: Yes, so as you know, Pathmark was part of a larger collapse of Pathmark, and you probably also know that for some years now there's been an effort, um, through EDC--it's called the Fresh Program--to provide incentives for supermarkets to locate, um, in neighborhoods where they're needed most. Um, that doesn't solve the immediate problem that you and--and Council Member Lander have obviously. Um, nor does it solve the problem that, um, Council Member Rodriguez had, um, you know, and I could go on. Um, we're at a particular moment right now where this is an acute issue. Um, I will say to you that all the efforts that you're doing to organize on this are noticed and extremely helpful because, you know, the city doesn't run these businesses. We can do whatever we can to make, um, make it better for them, and in some cases sometimes it's--but, you know, in the case of the Council Member in, um, in Washington Heights, it's a--it's an issue of, you know, the landlord is threatening there might be some things we can do to help these small business, through EDC. Um, so often there's got to be a targeted strategy. East Harlem obviously is another place that we're really

concerned about. But I can't emphasize this enough. We will help in every case, but we really need your leadership when these happen, um, because it is the-- it is the market that will drive the conversation. And I would love if that is what happens is that, you know, this is a place where community organizing really pays off. And if, um--if you're not successful we will, you know, then we're dealing with a developer, and we're happy to work with in any case where you're dealing with a developer to try to encourage this. Because we definitely join with you in your concern about the disappearance of really key retail establishments. We're not talking about your corner chicken place.

COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]

Uh-huh.

BARBARA TURK: Not that I don't love the corner chicken place. But we really are talking about major, major, um, anchor retail in the city, and, um, this is something that my office and EDC and--and Small Business Services are, you know, in conversation about and very available to you to talk about further--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [interposing]
3 Great, and I--and I think--

4 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Perhaps
5 something like a conver--a larger conversation with
6 the Council.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Wonderful and--
8 and I think--I think we're--we're there and, um, I'm
9 going to applaud Council Member Lander's--um, our
10 joint effort really in pushing this not just at the
11 developer level, but now kind of publicly saying how
12 do we bring a team together to isolate these issues.
13 Um, and as--as we know there's a lot of hunger for
14 this administration to--to do good development, and I
15 think this could be an interesting model to solve.
16 Um, so, I'll stop there. Thank you so much.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Um, Chair
18 Lander--Lander asked me to just pick up. I think I'm
19 next in line. So my questions are really, um, for a
20 Director Turk. I'm so glad to see you here today,
21 and I'm so glad that you're working, that you're our
22 food czar. It makes me feel better. So, um, I'm
23 wondering, um, my overarching question is could the
24 MMR be more helpful in making the case for stuff that
25

2 you think the city needs to do better? So, does the
3 MMR track--?

4 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Are you
5 talking about the Mayor's Management Report?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yes.

7 BARBARA TURK: Uh-huh.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you.

9 BARBARA TURK: Um, I think the CDC has
10 something called the MMR. We're also aware of.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Oh, yeah, good
12 point.

13 BARBARA TURK: I just wanted to make sure
14 you are aware of that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: No, not that.
16 Does the Mayor's Management Report, for example,
17 track, um, for each place where you could sign up for
18 SNAP, how is it going? How many people sign up at
19 that location? You know, that would be an indicator
20 that might be interesting, how many people sign up at
21 HRA, at a CBO, at NYCHA. Um, and maybe how many
22 places--it's a little obscure, but how many places
23 are a site where they actively ref people to SNAP? I
24 mean it's very--the council members' offices, but
25 also hopefully you would count the other 250 NYCHA

locations, um, where, you know, you could capture. Are they actively referring people to a CBO where they could sign up for SNAP or not? I mean it just seems like you have low-hanging fruit of places that, um, could be doing more. How do we help the city make that happen?

BARBARA TURK: Uh-huh, uh-huh. [pause]

We have a Food Metrics Report that the Council requires us to publish, and I don't mean that to sound like oh, my gosh, the Council requires us to publish it. It's really--it's a I think a great public service to everyone. Um, I think some conversation. We would need test and conversation about what belongs in the MMR and what belongs in the Food Metrics Report? Um, I think there's this larger question about what are the meaningful metrics that--that his administration hasn't had with this council. I would be open to that conversation.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And if the Food Metrics Report, which I think I saw one, is that sent to me because I'm Contracts Chair or is that public information?

2 BARBARA TURK: It's sent to you because
3 you--you get a--a notice of its publication of line.
4 It is a public--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
6 On line.

7 BARBARA TURK: --document.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay.

9 BARBARA TURK: Um, and, um, for those
10 that are not aware, I will even give you the--
11 somewhere here I have the address, the web address,
12 the web address, but it is, it is public. We also
13 printed copies--a limited edition, a limited
14 education public, um, copies of--of it on paper, but
15 it's in here somewhere. You would think I would
16 think my own, um, online address. It is published at
17 www.nyc.gov/foodpolicy.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Do you think
19 that the metrics in that report answer, um, include
20 indicators that would help make the case for things
21 that should be funded or things that the city should
22 be doing to get more people signed up for SNAP?

23 BARBARA TURK: The--it's--it's
24 interesting because there were no food security
25 metrics in the original, um, bill, but that was

2 interesting, and they were added in 2000. The first
3 time we published a Food Security Metric was in 2014,
4 which was last year and the--I don't know whether it
5 was an amendment or an additional bill, but it said
6 we should include food security. It did not specify
7 what the food security metrics should be.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Is that
9 something--

10 BARBARA TURK: As I said, I'm open to--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: [interposing]
12 Great. Thank you.

13 BARBARA TURK: --conversation about that.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yep. Thank you
15 so much for your service.

16 BARBARA TURK: Sure.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,
18 um, Council Member Rosenthal. Um, so I just have,
19 um, several more questions and perhaps some of my
20 colleagues want to come back for another round. Um,
21 I want to ask about, um, EFAP, um, funding. So
22 there's, um, in the FY16 Budget there is a--a \$1.8
23 million allocation in addition, as you said in your
24 testimony to the-- I'm going to go here to your
25 testimony. Um, I apologize. In addition to the \$11

point--um, sorry. Um, so you said in your testimony that the--the funding EFAP is, sorry, \$11.5 million baselined and a \$1.8 million FY16 allocation in addition to the Council funding. Can you explain the \$1.8 and whether that was intended to be, um, baselined or whether that's a--[coughs] excuse me--year-to-year.

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: Well, my understanding at this time with the \$1.8 was a collaboration between the Council and the administration and it is indicated that that it's a one-time increase for Fiscal Year 2016.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, that would be then in addition to the Council's \$800,000, is that right?

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: That's correct.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And what is the \$1.8 being used for? Is it--is it the same use as the \$11.5?

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: So what we've done with the \$1.8 is we've done an analysis of trends of food items that are most needed in a network. We've worked--um, we're working actively with the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty as well as

NASBY and Jewish Community Council as well as those organizations that actually service maybe a homeless population. And so, what we're looking at is those items that are most needed. So we're--we're attempting to procure those items in a larger amount so that we would be able to actually distribute that food primarily to those organizations. We're also looking at increasing some of the administrative expense grants so that those are grants that are actually used for non-food related expenses. And what we've found in actually analyzing food programs is that while there's a need for additional food, there's not always the capacity to distribute that food in a fair and equitable manner. In the case that some people need more storage, they need staffing, they need other--there are--there are other costs to actually distributing an emer--emergency food. So, what we've been able to do is increase those grants as well so that we will be able to, um, actually help them with that capacity. We've also looked at, um, frozen food. Historically, the Emergency Food Assistance Program has only distributed non-perishables. And so, we're looking to

actually use--utilize a large percentage of that, um, increased funding on frozen food.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So--so it's being--so then the \$1.8 is being used for--for food itself--

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --for these, um, associated costs or these soft costs that are within the pantries themselves. It looks like a--and that's a cash grant to pantries and kitchens?

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: Yes, it's--it's actually, um, similar to a reimbursement grant where--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Okay.

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: --they have these expenses. Um, throughout the fiscal year we're actually reimbursing them. What they actually do is they give us, um, documentation of the expense, and then--and then we--we give them the grant to cover it.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Is that--is that open to every pantry and kitchen in the EFAP program?

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: Yes. Yes, it is. Yes, it is.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, can you speak a little bit to, um, the structure of the EFAP program. You've been through this before in a--in a kind of ongoing way where, um, the role of--of the food bank as it relates to, um, the EFAP program and how, you know, there's a portion of the year in which it's a direct HRA, directly run HRA, and then--and then, of course, it's going to be a year (sic) where a food bank administers the EFAP program. Can you speak a little bit to that structure, and, um, how the funding is, um, allocated within that structure?

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: Um, okay, so what you're making reference to is actually a \$1.3 million grant that used to be, um, assigned to EFAP to run what we called a City Council project. In Fiscal Year 15 that particular funding was actually baselined into the EFAP budget. So it's no longer available for that particular project. What that project was, was that we would pick a select group of EFAP participants to actually, um, directly order food through--from the food banks wholesale, um, inventory. We no longer have that project. We still have a relationship, um, EFAP. I mean with the food

banks in New York City in that they actually store and distribute all of the EFAP food.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, now, the, um, so then there's no time of the year where any of the--the pantries are--are ordering food directly from food banks wholesale. My understanding before was that there was this--this--the second half of the year, the second six months of the fiscal year.

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: The last time we had that initiative would have been in the spring of 2015.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: '15. Okay. Um, you know the concerns that we heard from pantries, numerous pantries, um, was that was an easier--it was a--it was a better system for them, um, to be able to order from the food bank's inventory because, um, it was--they were able to--to choose what they were going to be, um, providing and there was a lot more flexibility within the system. It was, you know, more user friendly for, um, the pantries. And, um, and was able to help them meet their specific needs more effectively. Um, what has HRA been doing, um, since that was baselined, um, to--to kind of address those concerns, and are you--are you--do you have

round table with the pantries and how does the communication with the pantries go in order, um, to kind of address that challenge.

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: So we've actually taken two approaches since that time. We are actively, um, engaged in the food bank in exploring all the different options for what could be a proposal that would make the actual, um, pilot project that we used to have, as well as the Emergency Food Assistance Program to coordinate. So they've actually gone out to several of the emergency food programs, um, in order to be able to identify what their actual needs are. We've also most recently met with our, um, IT Department in order to see what would be, um, the viability of having what we could consider to be an EFAP borderline as well. So that people can have this type of flexibility, the providers.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I mean obviously we're going to be hearing from pantry providers--

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: [interposing] Yes, uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --um, later on, and actually I would encourage HRA to have somebody stay, um, behind to be able to hear their testimony as well. But, um, but in addition to that, we're going to have, you know, in advance of the budget, um, um, we're going to be having a budget roundtable, um, after the--the Preliminary Budget comes up with--from our committee. We're going to be talking to, um, providers about, you know, where things stand with them and-- You know, it's certainly something that we heard, you know, you know, no offense to HRA, but we heard unanimously from--from pantry providers that the system under the second half of the year with the food bank, um, inventory was, um, easier and, um, and just more effective for them. They were able to--to, um, to meet the specific needs of their--of their pantry more effectively.

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, hopefully we can continue that--that conversation, um, in the coming months.

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, taking a--a step back, and I--I apologize. As--as, you know, as HRA

1 knows, I--I kind of jump around a little bit towards
2 the end of my questions, but I want to make sure that
3 we're getting everything here on the record. Um, do
4 we--do we have a sense of what percentage of
5 eligible--of individuals with families eligible for
6 SNAP are--are currently enrolled in New York City. I
7 know that you spoke in your testimony, um, Ms.
8 Fitzpatrick about, um, that 50% of seniors that are
9 eligible, um, are actually participating in the
10 program. So you have a sense of the population at
11 large in New York City? This is the 30,000 foot view
12 of--of--of the issue.

14 BARBARA TURK: Is this the question that--
15 --we, um, Council Member Lander we had a fairly
16 extension conversation about this. I'm sorry, we
17 were--

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] No, no,
19 no I--I--I--

20 BARBARA TURK: That's okay. We don't--we--
21 --the--the short answer is it's hard to get that
22 number. The only thing I would add to what I said
23 earlier is that it's the number that moves around a
24 lot. Because, you know, this notion that there are
25 people who are, you know, food insecure year round or

that there are people who need food stamps all the time. I mean people are on and off, and--but it's, yeah, I mean, it's--it's a hard--it's a hard number to get.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, but we do--how were we able to determine--

BARBARA TURK: [interposing] So our focus is on--so our focus is on getting as many different subpopulations, if you will, that we target--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Sure.

BARBARA TURK: --particular groups of people that we know are hard to reach with our outreach, and we try to do special--special outreach to them, specific outreach to them, targeted outreach to them has been the strategy. Would it be nice to have some sense about how well that's working? I--you know, and how much of the fact--how much of the food stamp roll is going down is due to that effort. Sure it would be, but we can't necessarily sort out how much is because of people coming on and off the rolls, and how much is due to people being reluctant or hard to reach or any number of reasons.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, but we are able--so how are we able to get them the--the, you

know, for saying 50% of seniors that are eligible are enrolled in the program? How are we able to arrive at that number?

BARBARA TURK: Well, yeah, so it's--yeah, because we do the math with the Medicaid files.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: This is a matchup. Okay.

BARBARA TURK: Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, and has--have you see that number that 50% number, um, move in any direction since, um, since the senior citizen outreach program has been underway since September 2014?

BARBARA TURK: Do you guys have an idea about that?

LISA FITZPATRICK: I don't have that data here with me today. Um, as people come on, they go off the rolls for various reasons. So that's something that we could probably look at and see--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Well, certainly the--the--

LISA FITZPATRICK: --depending on--on the average.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --individuals that are enrolled, you know, that's a--that's going to be a fluid situation, but the--if we're looking again big picture, if we all agree that 50% is a number that's too low, which it is too low. Um, and we are engaging in this effort with the Robin Hood Foundation and BDT, DFTA. You know, it's been implemented for about 15 months now. Um, we want to make sure that it's--that it's working and--and that should-- You know, data should reflect--should be reflecting the efforts. And so, we should be able to, um, to see these--these, um, um, the impacts in--in kind of the trend numbers. You know, for example we saw the increase--we see--we see this, um, the number of, um, of New York City students that have graduated high school has gone up 50--70% (sic). So we're to track, you know, use those metrics to be able to track our progress. And so, I--I think that that would be, um, good to know, whether--how this program is working is whether or not that number if it's going up to 52% or 53% or 55%. That's something that--

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then I would--

2 LISA FITZPATRICK: [interposing] My
3 Colleague is saying that we--we do have the data from
4 BDT.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

6 LISA FITZPATRICK: That needs to be
7 matched against the Medicaid rolls.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

9 LISA FITZPATRICK: And it's a match that
10 happens at a point in time. So it's something I
11 think it's--it can be done. So, it's just a matter
12 of making sure that you have that information.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, um, and then--

14 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] And it is
15 important to remember this point in time--

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Of
17 course, 25.

18 BARBARA TURK: --for all the reasons I
19 said earlier.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Absolutely. You
21 know, 12 points of time in a year, you know, show a
22 trend. Okay. Um, in--in discussions with, um,
23 Department for the Aging so we have-- Um, a--a lot of
24 our senior centers have moved from NYCHA to DFTA. At
25 this point I think all of our senior centers are DFTA

run. I don't think there are any NYCHA. Um, are-- are we ensuring--I mean that's--that's--that's, um, access to thousands and thousands--tens of thousands of seniors every single day. Um, are we in every senior center. Um, and is every senior center director trained, and that would be one way to--to do it is to make sure that every senior director--senior center director or assistant director has the training to enroll all of-- Because I--I go to senior centers like in my district all the time. There's a set group of seniors that go to their senior center and they're there almost every day, you know, or three times a week they're there. And, um, and there's a relationship that's there between the center director, a real relationship with trust between center director and those seniors. Um, and-- and there's obviously access. Um, are we training senior center directors on how to, um, on--on all of the--the new programs and initiatives that HRA has, um, has, um, is--is--is, um, is--is--is laying out in terms of increasing enrollment?

LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: So, HRA SNAP Outreach services has a presence at over 40 senior centers, and at these locations where actually we have two

models. One is doing direct services to the actual seniors, and the other one is a train--the trainer model where we're actually, um, training the directors and/or other designees in order to be able to, um, give--give the seniors eligibility information and app--and assist them with application assistance. Um, in the past year we did about 148 actual senior events where we were able to--to actually work with the seniors to help them to apply and receive benefits.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. I mean I would--I would recommend because there are--I mean honestly between Carlos, Barry and I we have probably almost 40 senior centers between our three districts. There are hundreds of them throughout New York City. Um, I--I have one recommendation that I would make is it would--I think it would be not a particular labor intensive thing, but to--to make sure that just all senior center directors that are--have a DFTA contract, um, you know, say--are trained to at least be some--do some type of frontline enrollment. Um, and--and let--let their seniors know that they may be eligible for this, and, um, just--just in terms of getting seniors in that's a real point of access for-

-for thousands of seniors, and it's a--and it's an ongoing relationship. So that these seniors are-- it's not just a single event. They know these directors very well. They spend an awful lot of time, um, um, there and there's a level of trust that's--that's hard to replicate. Um, okay. Um, sorry. Going back to the NYCHA and I don't know if-- if--if any of my colleagues asked this. So, um, what is the--the status and you spoke to this in your testimony a little bit. What is the status of the match with NYCHA?

[pause]

BARBARA TURK: [off mic] With NYCHA he's saying.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, I mean in--in other words, how many, um, how many NYCHA residents have been identified?

BARBARA TURK: Okay that particular initiative is starting in February 2016. At the end of this month, we will be receiving an updated file from NYCHA and then we'll be working with the, um, the partner BDT in order to, um, start that initiative.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, so--so, um,
3 because that was announced back in--in November of
4 2014. So it's taken some time to get the computer
5 systems lined up. Is that--

6 BARBARA TURK: Um, yes, there's been some
7 issues with the data sharing agreements, and the
8 documents that needed to be in place before the
9 initiative can be implemented.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay. So that's
11 going to start this, um, next month?

12 BARBARA TURK: February 2016, uh-huh.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And, um, how many,
14 um, how many individuals or families does HRA hope to
15 identify through this initiative?

16 [background comments, pause]

17 BARBARA TURK: I don't actually have that
18 number at this time. I'm--I'm thinking that at last
19 count they were looking at identifying approximately
20 3,000 households within those 15 NYCHA, um,
21 locations, but we can get that forwarded to your
22 attention.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, 3,000 household.

24 So, I--I--I know Council Member Grodenchik asked
25 about this before, but-- So--so we're just looking at

2 15 NYCHA developments? We're not--in terms of doing
3 the data match?

4 LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: As my colleague
5 explained, this is part of the Mayor's, um,
6 initiative for safety. So we have 15 NYCHAs that
7 we're doing with this particular initiatives, but
8 there's out--there's ongoing outreach that happens in
9 the--in all of the NYCHA communities.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, if it's just a
11 data match, um, how come--is there a logistical
12 reason why you can only do 15 versus the whole
13 system?

14 BARBARA TURK: So those 15 are part of
15 the, um, the Mayor's Initiative that he developed
16 back in 2014 with the Office of Criminal Justice
17 Coordinator that was specifically aimed at reducing
18 hazards to public safety. So the focus of that--the
19 15 is on that.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

21 BARBARA TURK: The effort was to get as
22 many agencies involved as possible, and improving the
23 life and circumstances of people in those 15
24 developments who are identified as having the highest
25 rates of felonies in those buildings? So it was

never conceived as a--in that--in that particular initiative as opposed to the match it was never conceived as being part of the--part of an anti-hunger initiative or a food stamp enrollment issue--initiative. There are a number of different things that are going on in those buildings, and it's coordinated, um, under a different office on the criminal justice side.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, is it possible to extract that--if--if it's--if it's effective, if it works, is it possible to extract that, um, from--from that initiative in the Office of Criminal Justice and --and be able to scale it to--

BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Yeah, I mean I think what we're saying is it's not the only outreach that's being done with--with residents in public housing.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: No, no, of course, and I'm not saying--what I'm saying if it's--if it's particularly--

BARBARA TURK: [interposing] If it's successful.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --successful at identifying.

2 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And part of it is--

4 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] If it's
5 successful, we would want to replicate it, of course.
6 If we had the resources to do it, we would want to do
7 that.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, resources to do
9 it. So that's what I'm getting at.

10 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Always, you
11 know, it's always about-- You know, people were
12 talking earlier about knocking on doors and things
13 like that, you know, um, like we do with the--with
14 the Pre-K Initiative. That's a--you know, these are
15 very--

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Labor
17 intensive.

18 BARBARA TURK: Labor intensive forms of
19 outreach, which is why you hear us talking about
20 telephones and different ways of doing things. We're
21 trying to figure out how to do this--

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] I'm
23 saying with--

24 BARBARA TURK: --smart.
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --in particular with
3 NYCHA, which is like NYCHA--the population of NYCHA
4 is--

5 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Pretty self-
6 contained.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --the size of, you
8 know--

9 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Yes, in New
10 York City.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --as large--it's the
12 10th largest city in the United States probably. Um,
13 do--you don't want to knock on every door. You need
14 to be able to target it. If you're able--I think
15 the--I think--I think doing the match is a great
16 idea--

17 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --of--of--of
19 ensuring, you know, that you're not just knocking--
20 you going out and knocking--

21 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Yeah.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --on every single
23 door. You want to knock on the doors of those that
24 are likely to be eligible so--

25 BARBARA TURK: That's correct.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, so, um--

3 BARBARA TURK: [interposing] And I raise
4 some other--another point here if I may, and I know
5 I'm interrupting you.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] That's
7 okay.

8 BARBARA TURK: But if we had identified
9 that the only problem with SNAP enrollments was
10 knocking on doors and face time, then we would have--
11 You know, in many ways I think we would have a higher
12 enrollment. I don't think that's the only problem,
13 and I think that's why the commissioner and his staff
14 came up with the--the campaign to do destigmatize
15 SNAP enrollment.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yes.

17 BARBARA TURK: Because there's a lot of
18 people, and if you watch those adds, particularly the
19 ones that feature seniors about what they thought of
20 SNAP, and what they understood, you know, who SNAP is
21 for--

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Uh-huh.

23 BARBARA TURK: --um, and I never took a
24 dime from the government in my life, right. You
25 know, we need to think about that, and realize that

we could--you know, I think that's part of the calculation here--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yes.

BARBARA TURK: --is we can--we want to make sure everybody is aware. Um, as many people get a friendly entre into the program, and--and enrollment as possible. There are people who may not want to reveal things about their family budgets to us. You know, there's a whole host of other issues here, but I think that-- So, just to keep that in mind as we talk about this and not--not help--not assume that it's only about if we just had the right outreach--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yeah, sure.

BARBARA TURK: --it would all be solved.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Again, that's why I was--particularly with a senior population doing that type of training or outreach with senior center directors I think would be very effective because there's a--you're--you're going in with (a) able to identify, and (b) a level of trust with the senior center directors that, um, you know, no offense to HRA out--outreach workers, but it's not going to be

there with a worker that, um, you know, people have met for the very first time. Um, I'm, you know, I-- those of us that spend a lot time at senior centers, which, you know, all of us are politicians and we do. You know, we--you know, you--you see a lot, you develop--you see a lot of pre-existing relationships--

-

BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Me, too.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --and, you know, we establish those relationships as well so--

BARBARA TURK: [interposing] Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, Council Member Grodenchik.

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: One last question, Mr. Chairman. Um, Ms. Fitzpatrick, in your testimony, um, you noted that stamp recipients purchased more than \$3 billion in food. What percentage of that is provided by SNAP and what percentage--do--do we have an estimate on it? Is it a third, is it a half? [pause] And I assume that's the total food purchase not just with SNAP benefits because otherwise it would be about \$4,400 per person. [pause] This is what happens when you're married to a math professor. [background comments,

pause] You can get the answer to us if--if-- I don't want to delay, you know.

BARBARA TURK: Um, we'll confirm that information for you.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: [interposing]
Okay, thank you very much.

BARBARA TURK: --just to make sure that we give you the right information.

CHAIRPERSON GRODENCHIK: Thank you very much.

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I just want to, um, just ask one more question about, um, online eligibility. Um, so can you speak a little bit about, um, the effectiveness so far, and maybe some of the challenges that are--that HRA is facing with--with online eligibility efforts.

LISA FITZPATRICK: Yeah, sure. Um, the online, um, application process is actually a really good and effective strategy to get people to apply for assistance because they don't have to come in and submit a paper application. They can do it from their home, from a coffee shop, anywhere where they have computer access. What we're finding, however,

is that, um, we actually did a survey of our clients a number of years ago, and we found that a lot of our clients are defaulting to mobile applications like iPads and, um, Smart Phones. So, the desktop or the laptop technology isn't as effective today as it probably would have been a few years ago. So we're trying to evaluate, and this mobile upload document is just one way that we can show that if we change with the technology then it can help to improve access to benefits and services. So, clients can use the computers to file applications, but we--where we really would like to go in the future is to have a Smart Phone application to apply for SNAP benefits. We have an updated ACCESS NYC. It looks great. We got a lot of great feedback regarding it, and it's just making sure that people have access to computers in order to use the, um, the, um, current website. So that's why it was important for us to have these computer banks in our local offices because it gave clients an opportunity to come in and use the computers in order to file the applications if they did not have access to technology, Internet service, and desktop computers at home or they didn't feel comfortable going to local libraries.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Why--why, um, desktop
3 computers and not Smart Phones? What's the
4 technological problem there?

5 LISA FITZPATRICK: So, um, as you know,
6 some people including myself are--are seeing impaired
7 and it's a little bit more complicated in order to go
8 through the screens on a Smart Phone.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

10 LISA FITZPATRICK: Plus with the desktop
11 technology, you can actually enlarge the font to make
12 easier for people that, um, have issues with their
13 sight.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

15 LISA FITZPATRICK: So, the application
16 that we have in place at this point is not
17 necessarily ready and optimized for Smart Phones, but
18 it would be something--a strategy that would be
19 helpful in the future.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And are you--are you
21 working with a technology company or an IT company
22 to--to develop the model.

23 LISA FITZPATRICK: [interposing] Yeah we
24 have the re-engineering team, and like there's no
25 shortage of great ideas. That's one thing, but it's

just making sure that we have the resources in order to do some of the things that are on this list.

Because we started off just looking at the food stamp program, but we also want to look at cash assistance, and make it easier for people to apply and recertify for cash assistance. So, it's really not just about food stamps, and I manage the Child Support Program as well. So we want to give people the ability to interact with HRA without necessarily having to come in in person. So there are lots of ideas about how we can, you know, open the doors electronically so people can get information. They can access services, but it's really about, you know, prioritizing the work and making sure that we have the strategies in place. Because when we went to telephone interviews it's a great innovative tool to not have to come in and have an interview, but to have it by telephone. But then, the reverse effect is that it takes a while to be called, and I know many people who waited for the cable man, and how, you know, people just don't want to wait. And so they're finding that some people just don't want to wait for that interview and they want that rescheduling and through that rescheduling process

they could be losing access to expedited benefits.

So we--just looking at all of these processes, the technology is wonderful and fantastic. We want to make sure that the culture keeps up with the technological advance--advancements.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How about uploading documents from--from your iPhone? Is that something that's--

LISA FITZPATRICK: So that's in the testimony--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yeah.

LISA FITZPATRICK: --and that's been-- it's actually a very effective strategy, and it's working. I think we had over 20,000 images that have been uploaded to date, and that's actually something that's more effective than the eFax. Um, when Commissioner--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Right, sure.

LISA FITZPATRICK: --Banks--when Commissioner Banks came in 2014 to testify, you know, that was the technology at that time using this electronic fax number. So instead of it going to an old fax machine and the paper is falling on the

floor, you--you would send it to a fax machine that's actually connected to a computer desktop, and those images will pop up on the computer.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

LISA FITZPATRICK: But now, here we are in 2015 to 2016, that technology is greatly outdated. The clients have been using it, but we want to move people away from using eFax, and try to use the Smart Phone technology. The people that have used it, they said it is very effective, and it actually makes it easier for workers on the back end to be able to commit those images to our centralized repository. When they come in by fax, unfortunately, we're finding sometimes clients don't put their case numbers or they send us a lot of documents for a lot of different program areas all in that one fax. So, it's been hard to piece--pull apart the documents that come up--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Yeah.

LISA FITZPATRICK: --through the fax machine. With this Smart Phone technology, it knows exactly where the document needs to go based on the information the client is putting in. So, we, you know, eFax--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] All right, it's like depositing a check.

LISA FITZPATRICK: Yes, eFax was great back in 2014, but now--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Uh-huh.

LISA FITZPATRICK: -that it's moved to 2016, and we're using different technology.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: A brave new world, right.

LISA FITZPATRICK: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, okay. Um, thank you so much for your testimony for answering, um, council member's questions. Um, if we have any follow-up questions, we--we may, um, submit--submit a letter to you. So, um, but we look forward to working with you, and we may have some follow-up questions at the Preliminary Budget hearing. We expect to based on our roundtable discussions with the EFAP providers. Um, but again, I would--I would ask that somebody from HRA, um, stay--stay behind, um, to listen to their testimony as well so that we can make sure that we're all on the same page. But again, I want to thank you for all of your efforts

2 thus far, and we look forward continuing a very
3 positive relationship. Thank you.

4 BARBARA TURK: Thank you.

5 LA MAUNDA MAHARAJ: Yes, thank you.

6 LISA FITZPATRICK: Yes, thank you very
7 much and we do have someone who's staying behind.
8 So, yes, thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Okay.
10 [pause] [coughs] Okay, we will start public
11 testimony starting with Rachel Sebella from the Food
12 Bank for New York City; Rena Resnick, Metropolitan
13 Council on Jewish Poverty; Loren Miller, United Way;
14 Althea Cruz Marali (sic), Safety Net Activists.

15 [pause]

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, we're going to
17 ask folks to stick to a three-minute clock because we
18 do have a lot of testimony. Okay, whoever wants to
19 begin. Thank you.

20 RACHEL SABELLA: Okay. Thank you,
21 Council Member Levin. My name is Rachel Sabella. I
22 am the Director of Government Relations at Food Bank
23 for New York City. I want to thank you for the
24 opportunity to testify today. I also want to thank
25 you and the entire City Council for continuing to

prioritize anti-hunger work, whether it's increased funding to EFAP, whether it is supporting universal school meals, the Council continues to prioritize this to make it one of their top agenda items and we are grateful to be in this battle with you. So thank you. I also want to thank our partners at HRA. Food Bank of New York City was thrilled to be able to honor Commissioner Banks and the entire team at HRA at our Legislative Breakfast this year. We know they are doing all that they can and working hard with us in order to increase access to benefits, and to make things easier for people suffering in New York City. So, we're thankful for that. You have copies of my written testimony so I'm not going to read from that. I've also included in there a detailed list of our policy recommendations. Um, it also includes recommendations at the state and federal level. I know we're all anxiously awaiting the governor's announcement today. I know the Council makes an annual trip to Albany. So I do hope some of those priorities will also make it on your agenda as well. One of the big things I want to say to you today is New York City is facing a meal gap of 241,000 meals. That's in all neighborhoods. That's in all Council

districts. I've included a map in your testimony, and I will continue to meet with every single council member and make sure that gets in everybody's hand to see that information. There are emergency food providers in every Council district. I am so pleased that today you will be able to hear from the hard working men and women that are working in emergency food programs throughout the city. They will be able to share the details of their program. They will share the stories and they will be able to give you more information and more data to help you fight for those priorities. I want to say that I agree with everything we heard the Council say today. Council Member Grodenchik, we absolutely agree with you. The funding for EFAP we need to increase that. Last year one of our biggest advocacy points was less than .01% of the City budget goes to support emergency food programs. That's something that we want to continue to work with the Council to change. We're excited to have you here, and to work with you on that as well. We want to continue to work with the Council on increased SNAP out--outreach. You know--I heard from several members about that. Food banks are some of our own work. We're happy to talk with you more

about that, and to continue to work with HRA. I want to be mindful of the time limit, and also that there are a lot of people here to talk to you today. So I am going to wrap up my remarks, but once again, I want to say thank you, and we look forward to continuing to work with you in this battle.

RENA RESNICK: [coughs] Thank you Chair Levin and the Committee on General Welfare for inviting us to speak today. My name Rena Resnick and I'm the Public Affairs Manager at Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty. For more than four decades Met Council has supported and championed families, seniors and adults living in poverty and near poverty through a myriad of social services including their country's largest kosher food pantry network, and aggressive SNAP outreach. In the fight against poverty, we serve immigrants, seniors living on fixed incomes, the under and unemployed and many others in need. As an organization founded on Jewish values, we serve everyone--we serve everyone with dignity and empathy regardless of race, ethnicity or religion. As many people in this room know, there are over one million food insecure New Yorkers, of which more than 300,000 people live in poor and near

poor Jewish households that observe kosher dietary laws. For many of our clients, the high cost of kosher food presents a unique challenge. While statewide most families run out of SNAP benefits by the third week of each month, the average family that keeps kosher runs out by the second week. Allow me to tell the story of one of these food insecure New Yorkers. For many years, David owned a butcher shop in Borough Park. Every Friday, David would put aside some of the meat to provide free of charge to family-families in his neighborhood so that they can celebrate the Sabbath with dignity. As a senior now, Sam no longer works at the store. Without his income that he had earned at the store, he struggled every month to pay his rent and utilities. To save money, David stopped purchasing kosher protein until the day he walked into Borough Park JCC, and a caseworker enrolled him into SNAP. Now, with the assistance of SNAP, David is able to add kosher protein into his diet to ensure that he is able to have a nutritious diet. David is one of the tens of thousands of poor and near poor New Yorkers who we serve through our food programs, which are designed to aid, sustain, and empower hungry New Yorkers. Last year, we

provided pantry items for more than 2-1/2 million meals to over 15,000 families each month at 30 sites. We helped enroll 11,000 families into SNAP, and we provided over \$500,000 in emergency food cards. We understand the unique challenges of affording kosher food, and the importance of kosher food for, which we love. (sic) That--that is why our food in the system is kosher. That said, our services are available to anyone who is hungry provided that they keep kosher. In order to help more New Yorkers in the fight against hunger, we've expanded our SNAP outreach to focus on Holocaust survivors and seniors. Many seniors worked their entire lives, but do not have a deep enough safety net, and are unaware that they qualified for SNAP. Through the City Council Holocaust Survivor Initiative Fund, the Council created a new initiative called the Fourth Week Initiative for Holocaust Survivors, which will buy and deliver groceries to survivors who are SNAP recipients during the fourth month of each--the fourth week of each month. A new core (sic) media will ensure that clients receive supplemental groceries delivered to their homes, and we'll check in on the clients to evaluate for additional

services. [bell] There is more about it (sic) but thank you so much for allowing us to testify, and we would not be here without the support of the City Council.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much for your testimony.

LOREN MILLER: Good morning--good afternoon. My name is--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] If you can turn on the microphone, please. Push the--push the button. It should be red. There you go.

LOREN MILLER: Okay, I'm Loren Miller and I serve as Associate Vice President of Policy at United Way of New York City. Thank you, Chairperson Levin and the members the City Council Committee on General Welfare for holding today's hearing on hunger. And we appreciate the Council's continued commitment to this annual hunger oversight hearing, but we are deeply saddened that issues of hunger and food insecurity continue in New York City. We continue to have a high level of urgency for so many of our neighbors. We absolutely support all of the work to relieve hunger, all of the investments. We applaud everything that has been said today, but

hunger is a symptom of poverty, and as one of the richest cities in the world, it's incumbent upon us to strengthen the services and support that we provide to reduce the magnitude of New Yorkers who are food insecure throughout the year. But it is absolutely essential that we institute systems changes that will stop creating and recreating poverty in the first place. To do this, requires our collective will especially of government, business, the non-profit sector and philanthropy. And it requires us to collaborate and align our efforts along a clear roadmap. So I just want to highlight some of the things that United Way is working on in terms of the hunger reduction work? We have Feed NYC Initiative that strengthens 400 food pantries and soup kitchens around the city. And in 2014, we invested \$11 million in more than 500 community-based organizations so that thousands of children, adults and families could access emergency food, shelter, and income supports to meet their basic needs. In addition to our program funding and capacity building supports to food pantries and soup kitchens, emergency rent, mortgage and utility payments and SNAP, we are founding member of the Policy Committee

on New York City Hunger Resources. And through this collaboration, we partnered with colleagues to coordinate resources and move towards a more efficient and targeted distribution of scarce food and capacity support funds. So there's been a lot of prop--progress, and--and we applaud all the efforts, and we just want to highlight a couple of things across the Council, the Mayor's Office, HRA, Department of Education. We--we are encouraged by Mary de Blasio's recent minimum wage increase. Um, we are encouraged by all of the support for anti-hunger initiatives particularly for school children. Um, we endorse support Health Bucks and the \$1.8 million to fill substantial gaps in the emergency food programs. And, we applaud all of he efforts to make SNAP more accessible for more families. It's an efficient cost-effective and consistently reliable source of support to reduce food insecurity. So our recommendations fall under seven big categories. We urge the Council, the City, all the City agencies to work together. It's critical that we increase wages to align with the real cost of living, and annually adjust (sic) them to inflation. [bell] Continue to support the emergency --the emergency food system;

ensure reliable access to healthy and nutritious food; facilitate comprehensive benefit access; target policies and programs and early pilot rollouts to communities of concentrated poverty; improve affordability of health food through the testing and scaling efforts of healthy food retail environments, and ensure high quality education for all students to increase the rates of students graduating from high school ready for college and career. Thank you.

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

[pause]

ALTHEA CRUZ MARALI: Hi. Good afternoon. My name is Althea Cruz Marali (sic), and I'm a member of the Safety Net Activists and a group supporter of the Safety Net Project at the Urban Justice Center. My experience dealing with hunger and problems with my SNAP benefits has gone on for several years. In 2014, HRA had reduced my SNAP benefits to \$15 based on a miscalculation. I requested several fair hearings and won all of them, but my case was never corrected. It was finally--it was finally corrected last month in December of 2015 after years of hardship. Going back and forth with my submissions

to fair hearing, winning my case and not having my benefits sent to me, actually affected my depression. During this time, I had to try to try and balance my finances between my medical expenses to meet my medical needs, and not having food. A lot of New Yorkers are in the situation of not having enough money to take care of what they need to take care of. They face hunger as a result. In order to address these issues, we recommend the following changes to decrease hunger in New York City. More resources for administration of the SNAP program. And unfortunately many New Yorkers have had similar experiences to mine with the SNAP program in the past several years. Over the past five years, the Safety Net Project has seen a 95% increase in New Yorkers having problems with their food stamps. The most common problems are incorrect budgeting, lost documents, their hearing compliance in phone interviews. While we commend Commissioner Banks and HRA's efforts to make improvements, we recommend increased resources and oversight for the SNAP program. Unfortunately, we believe that much of the 11% decrease in SNAP participation is due to increased barriers to getting SNAP. Expand the

2 Health Bucks Program. The Health Bucks Program is
3 run by New York City Department of Health and allows
4 SNAP recipients to receive \$2.00 for every \$5.00
5 spent at a farmer's market. This program is good for
6 everyone. It expands access to healthy food for New
7 Yorkers and supports local farmers. We encourage the
8 Council to work with the Department of Health to
9 expand the Health Bucks Program by matching SNAP
10 purchases dollar for dollar. The program should also
11 be spread to produce for the New York City Green Card
12 in grocery stores. Both of these things are already
13 done in states such as Michigan and with great
14 success. And also work with the State to expand SNAP
15 to more immigrants. Immigrant families are more
16 likely to suffer from inadequate income and food
17 insecurity than other households. Part of the
18 program is that many immigrants [bell] in New York
19 city-- Thank you very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: You--you can--you can
21 wrap--you can wrap up--you can--

22 ALTHEA CRUZ MARALI: Oh, thank you. Um,
23 part of the problem is that many immigrants in the
24 New York City are not eligible for SNAP under current
25 rules. The Council should work with the state to

expand food stamps to these immigrants as is currently done in Maine, Connecticut, California, Minnesota and Washington. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much for your testimony, and we are going to take all of these recommendations under advisement. I want to thank this panel. I can take--I encourage you to continue your advocacy. Um, we are at the beginning of our budget process for this year, and it's important for, um, also the City Council, and this committee, um, to hear the main points, um, that we would like to advance in terms of an FY17 Budget. Um, you know, it's--it's, um, we are working with an administration that is, um, um, collaborative, and that is, you know, would like to work with us. And it is not afraid to allocate the resources, um, where those resources are needed. Um, so I think that there's a significant difference between this administration and the previous administration in that regard. And that I feel like in the previous administration we were just begging them not to cut more. And this administration is actually considering adding, um, new--new resources where they could be most effective. So I really appreciate

these recommendations. I look forward to reading through the rest of your testimony that you weren't able to speak to, and I look forward to working with you all as we move forward in this budget season. Thank you. We've also been joined by Council Member Ritchie Torres of the Bronx. We were joined previously by Council Member Corey Johnson of Manhattan. Next panel. Emily Morano from Single Stop; Rachel Sherrow from Citymeals on Wheels; Beatrice Diaz Taveras from Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New York; and Ashley Rafalow from CUNY School of Public Health and New York City Food Policy Center. [pause] Okay. Whoever would like to begin.

EMILY MORANO: Good morning. My name is Em--sorry, my name is Emily Morano, and on behalf of Single Stop I wish to thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. My testimony will focus on food insecurity among college students in New York City. Single Stop has over 65 sites across all five boroughs that help low-income families and individuals reach financial stability by providing access to the full spectrum of available resources. We have served over one million low-income households in New York City since 2007. Through our work at

eight sites at CUNY, we find that few people associated college students with hunger despite growing evidence of food insecurity on campuses. In fact, a groundbreaking study found that almost 40% of CUNY students experienced food insecurity in the previous year. Our sites sees students without enough to eat who are worried, jittery and unable to concentrate. Single Stop college sites enables students to tap into resources that can be used as a supplement form of financial aid preventing students from being forced to choose between a degree and basic necessities like food. One key resource our sites use to fight hunger is campus food pantries. Single Stop believes that food pantries should be the norm across New York college campuses and the single-- that the City Council should support their expansion and long-term sustainability. Food pantries are an important presence on campuses particularly because of federal restrictions of college students receiving SNAP benefits. In partnership with food banks, a few CUNY sites have piloted pantries through their Single Stops and food banks in CUNY are continuing their partnership to bring pantries to campuses. We know other schools are interested in developing them, but

despite low start-up costs, the difficulty in establishing a consistent funding stream is a barrier. I hope you will refer to my written testimony for more, but I'd like to leave you with Ben's story. He's a single father in Kingsborough Community College's Nursing Program, who lost his job, fell behind on rent and was facing eviction when he was connected with the Single Stop site on campus. Our site lead, Hattie, was able to immediately connect him with the food pantry, as she connected him with a lawyer to stave off eviction, get his daughter into child care, help him secure SNAP and WIC and use the school's resource book to help him find a part-time job. Hattie likes to say that a lot of her students just need a break. We must do our best to give it to them by providing more resources like food pantries to support hardworking students like Ben stay in school, allow them a fair shot at education and economic opportunity. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak here today.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much for your testimony.

RACHEL SHERROW: Thank you, Chairman, for staying with us today, and I'm grateful to Council

for having this hearing. My name is Rachel Sherrow.

I'm the Associate Executive Director at Citymeals on Wheels. I won't go into who we are and what we do.

You know and you can read our testimony. What I

really want to focus on is an incredibly vulnerable population that we serve, homebound elderly who are

unable to access food pantries and soup kitchens

because they're homebound. So we are able to bring

them meals everyday, one meal a day. For some of our

population that is not enough. As you heard from HRA,

the senior population has a high rate of, um, not

using--not utilizing the food stamp or SNAP benefits

even though they're eligible. One Stop programs and

the senior center outreach has been fantastic for

those who are ambulatory. Again, going back to our

vulnerable homebound clients, they are unable to

access the benefits without having somebody come to

their home. We are together in a partnership with

Live On New York. With one social, have begun

outreach in about 2014 in Queens and Brooklyn. We

have reached over 500 homebound elderly meal

recipients and enrolled currently today over 200 who

are actually receiving the benefits an aver of \$117 a

month, which is tremendous for our population who are

living on fixed incomes. This is not a population going back into the workforce. We're not going to be able to see their income rise. So this is incredibly important. We need more efforts to reach our client population. We also have an additional food supplement--supplementary food program for our most vulnerable. 14% of our recipients need more than the one meal a day. So, we are delivering food pantry items directly to our clients because again, they are unable to access pantries and soup kitchens. So out of our warehouse in Brooklyn, we're bringing these supplemental products to them. We need more funding to increase it. We only are able to serve 500 clients right now. We need to triple that amount at least. There are 18,000 folks getting Meals on Wheels throughout New York City, but the real number is probably double that, and that's because a lot of them can't access benefits like SNAP because they're not in the system yet. So in conclusion, we need a lot more funding, and support and we need to look at different pockets of populations that are unable to access these wonderful services that are out there. We need to give them a little more support. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Rachel.
My apologies. I misread your name before.

RACHEL SHERROW: It's okay.

BEATRIZ DIAZ TAVARES: Good afternoon,
Councilman and Chairman. Thank you for inviting us
to testify before you today. I am Beatriz Diaz
Tavares, the Executive Director of for Catholic
Charities Community Services here in the Archdiocese
in New York. I'm pleased to speak to you about the
work and experience of Catholic Charities and the
delivery of social services, and the current
challenges we face with hunger. Catholic Charities
Community Service's Feeding our Neighbor Program
meets the immediate needs for nutritious food for
hungry individuals and families in crisis. And
provides support services to help people gain the
tools and resources they need to become more self-
sufficient. Feeding Our Neighbors relies on multiple
partnerships to achieve our goals. We work with
government funders as well as corporate and private
foundations. We coordinate with parishes and
affiliated agencies and hosts of community-based non-
profits. We have over 200 dedicated volunteers
working with us. This year on January 24th, we will

launch our Feeding our Neighbors campaign. It is actually an ecumenical effort to replenish the food pantries and soup kitchens in our communities that so many families rely on to survive. Last year we raised over 1.3 million in collaboration with the Veteran--Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies and UJA and our corporate sponsors. This year, we hope to raise over 1.5 million meals. It's a concentrated time in January where many people forget that there are hungry people in New York. We remember at Thanksgiving, but not in January. In keeping with our Catholic Charities model of providing holistic services, we really believe that it's essential to increase case management support available to the clients of emergency food programs throughout the network. I--I do applaud you for asking about senior centers. Why don't we have case management support in all our senior centers? In particular, it's very necessary. It is that relationship that is built. It's not going to an office as many people have noted. We also want to call for the increase of EFAP. Again, I join with all the advocates and yourself calling for the increase of EFAP because it's so necessary for all

our food pantries, and with that I conclude my testimony. It is much further and longer in my papers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much and I just want to say for the record that I have two Catholic Charities senior centers in my district, and absolutely the directors and the assistant directors there have--

RACHEL SHERROW: [interposing] They do sign people up. Yeah.

BEATRIZ DIAZ TAVARES: Yes. [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sorry.

RACHEL SHERROW: They do sign people up.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: They do.

RACHEL SHERROW: Along with the--they do sign people up along with all the other hats that they're wearing.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, of course, of course. It would be--it would be great to--to have a, you know, a concerted effort and training and, you know, all of that, but thank you so much for the great work that--that--that your organization does as well.

BEATRIZ DIAZ TAVARES: Thank you.

ASHLEY RAFALOW: Good morning. Thank you for having me. My name is Ashley Rafalow and with my colleague Nick Freudenberg, we're please to present testimony on hunger in New York City on behalf of the New York City Food Policy Center at Hunter Colleges funding in part by the City Council and the CUNY School of Public Health. Today we suggest two ways for HRA to strengthen its efforts to reduce hunger and food insecurity in New York City. The first is to develop new initiatives to increase access to food assistance for New York City's immigrants and refugees. The second is to take additional action to reduce food insecurity among the CUNY--around the City University of New York's 275,000 degree students and their families. Both of these recommendations emerge from our ongoing work at the CUNY School of Public Health and the Food Policy Center. As you know, New York City is home to an estimated 500,000 undocumented immigrants, and many are at risk of food insecurity and hunger. Unfortunately, over the last several years, the federal government has made these immigrants ineligible for many of the food benefits that help other city residents to reduce food insecurity and hunger. Any plan to make hunger

history in New York City must address the needs of this population. As public health researches we know that the high rates of food insecurity among immigrants contributes to a variety of health problems. Paradoxically, these conditions affect the under-nourished who are forced to spend limited food resources and energy for nutrient poor food. For U.S. citizens through programs like SNAP, WIC and school food provide a safety net against poverty so families can devote income to other needs avoiding the consequences of food insecurity. For immigrants, however, legal barriers, organizational practices of food program stigma, fear and cultural values often block use of these programs, depriving many of benefits. These obstacles vary by immigration status, age, years of residence in the U.S. and national origin. So how can New York City and HRA promote food security for its immigrant residents? Conduct a comprehensive review to identify food benefits that are available to various categories of immigrants and promote these options in immigrant communities for educational and advocacy campaigns that seek to reduce the organizational and attitudinal barriers to participation. For example,

all immigrants regardless of documentation status are eligible for school meals and summer meals programs.

Yet, to our knowledge, no one has assessed participation rates in various immigrant populations nor actively promoted the use of this important and valuable form of food assistance in immigrant communities. And second, it's considered adopting an approach tried in other states in the past whereby state or city government takes up the cost of SNAP benefits for people currently ineligible due to immigration status. While such a policy would add costs to public budgets in the short run, it would also save costs in the longer run by reducing the adverse consequences. It would also be as (sic) New York City's commitment to the inclusion of all residents and the life of the city and then making basic food needs a human right. Second, and I'm running out of time. We want to talk about our own community, CUNY, 275,000 degree students and as was mentioned before, there was a survey in 2010 finding that about 40% of CUNY's students reported some level of food insecurity in the previous year. Since that time, the issue of food insecurity and hunger among college students [bell] has become a national issue

attracting media attention and a report from HUD.

CUNY has taken steps to address the needs we

identified including expansion of Single Stop, which

we have already discussed. So I won't cover that.

This fall, we completed another survey of CUNY

undergraduates, and the results are a little better,

but still a big problem. If our final analysis

confirms this drop, it's good progress. 23%

reporting sometimes they're often skipping meals

because of lack of money down to 15%. But that sill

means that 40,000 of our students report some form of

hunger. So, what could HRA, the City and CUNY do to

end this problem? Launch a comprehensive and

sustained campaign to enroll every SNAP eligible

student and ensure that they and their families get

the benefits to which they're entitled further

expansion will stop. Explore new approaches to

making healthy and affordable food more available on

CUNY campuses. So we invite other organizations to

join us in making history at CUNY and citywide.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much

for your testimony, and I want to thank you this

panel and the organizations that you represent

because you're out there doing the important work every single day of working with clients, and going to through the process of enrollment and continuing benefits, and expanding benefits. And, you know, we on the governmental side, um, do our best to support the work that you do, but your colleagues at your organizations are actually on the front lines doing the--the real work. And so, we commend you and we thank you, and we look forward continuing our relationship and--and supporting you in the future.

ASHLEY RAFALOW: Thank you.

BEATRIZ DIAZ TAVARES: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: The next panel Michael Czackes from GMHC; Paul Carr from GMHC; Chief Carr from City Harvest and Ariel Sarvansky. I apologize if I'm mispronouncing your name, Citizens Committee for Children. [pause] Okay, and whoever wants to begin.

MICHAEL CZACKES: Good morning. My name is Michael Czackes from the Gay Men's Health Crisis. Earlier this morning I was actually asked what our interest is in hunger in New York City. And at GMHC we serve 81,000 hot, nutritious meals in our dining room every year. In addition, we have a food pantry

that generates nearly 30,000 meals per year. Sadly, due to the ever-increasing cost of food combined with cuts to food stamps and other support programs we now have a 300-person waiting list for our food pantry. The space where our--where our clients eat their meals is also--is the dining room. It's also a community room, a family room, a place where our clients come and build friendships and share about the challenges of HIV treatment, discuss connections to HIV specific medical care and living with HIV. In addition to actual meals, we have trained staff nutritionists to support clients in developing healthy eating patterns outside of GMHC. Back in 2013, sequestration on the federal level meant cuts for our budget across the board including a 15% cut in Ryan White funding. That meant cuts to the food that our clients need in order to take the medications to take daily to live with HIV. But despite setbacks, we are committed to our meals program because we know that HIV attacks the immune system. A group of organisms in cells would depend on a healthy in order to defend the body against disease, infection and foreign substance abuse. We know that staying healthy for people with HIV

requires special attention to quantity and quality of food intake, which is why we continue our meals program every year. People with HIV must retrieve-- receive nutrition and in a safe setting such as our-- such as GMHC's dining room. Additionally, low-income people are also more likely to acquire food by less safety or sanitary means. Yet, people with HIV are also particularly susceptible to bacteria, and other pathogens that cause food-borne illness. So New York food pantries are only part of the solution to effect--prudent to deal with food insecurity in our city. Food pantries provide necessary relief, but they do not create opportunities for long-term independent nourishment. A real solution will--will require better coordinated federally funded nutrition benefits with broader access. State and local governments must also work to provide better low-income access to fresh produce through programs like Food Bucks. And we also know that government should incentivize the sale of healthy food in low-income communities through tax laws and zonings. The federal government must also reform agricultural policies in order to boost domestic farm production, and consumption to minimize--and minimize fuel costs.

In the meantime, food pantries, meals programs are-- will be essential for New Yorkers living with HIV and AIDS. But we also do encourage any council member that wants to come and visit our dining hall any time to please reach out to us and contact us. We serve New Yorkers from all five boroughs including many New Yorkers who feel comfortable coming to our dining hall to get services, than getting them in their community because of the diseases that they're living with. [bell] Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Mike.

PAUL CARR: My name is Paul Carr. I'm a client at GMHC. I also--I live in Congregate Care facility. [coughs] I want to thank GMHC for the-- for the hot meals. The city is providing it, but it's not enough money nor is it for the Victory (sic) program. There are people, clients at GMHC who live in other boroughs and want to go to meal programs in other boroughs because that's the only one, or they have to go home. But they have the money to pay for the transportation, and maybe they need to stop at a regular grocery store because there isn't a grocery store in the community, but HRA is placing them in housing. This phone program I was listening to was

people have like Obama phones. Are they going to use our 500 minutes up waiting for the person, the ten people that are staffed to answer the call? Um, you know, and how they're going to roll that out into the city I do not know. My Congregate Care Program--I want that in quotes--my Congregate Care Program, um, the city built these kitchens. Um, and they have kitchen there. It's not--they don't cook the food there any more, but they pay for a chef to sit there for eight hours a day to wait for the food that's being outsourced, and this all okayed by HRA. So, you know, we really need to start taking a looky--a look as to what--what are--what are the programs? I mean HRA is condoning this, and we get this thing, and it's called like the--we had dinner the other night. It was called, con chili--corn turkey chili. There was no corn. I couldn't identify the turkey, and I have nutritional needs. I've had AIDS for almost--over 20 years. I have--I look okay, but I have these two (sic). I don't have the energy. I had Doritos last night. That was my dinner. You know, so yeah, there are people and I get--I actually have better benefits with other people. So when I turn around and I'm like hungry, it's go to this

street. I would like to invite you to come to my
congregate care, to come eat and see what the food is
like. I want to thank--and you know, Corey Johnson.
Corey Johnson showed up, and he is appalled at what
is going on at the Congregate Cares. But, I'm going
to actually defer my time, because I think you
understand that I speak for other people at other
agencies. They're not able to get here because they
didn't have the money to get the transportation and
the choice because they had to get to the Meal
Program because I'm missing my meal right now today,
and I really would encourage-- Thank you for your
work, but I also would encourage the city and I know
the city could do a lot better. My great grandfather
was a city councilman here. He sat in first district
chairman's office, and I'm kind of embarrassed to sit
up here and say this. But I'd be--I would kind of be
ashamed of myself if I didn't sit up here and speak
up for the people that are not here to speak up, but
we're hungry. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And what--and what
[applause] Thank you for your testimony and we will
take you up on your offer. I would love to--I would
love to--

2 PAUL CARR: Bring Corey. He knows.

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'll--I'll--I'll
4 bring Corey. We'll--we'll--

5 PAUL CARR: I don't think he wants to eat
6 there ever again.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [laughs]

8 PAUL CARR: I used to just bring over my
9 meals and say like yeah this what they were serving
10 us.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Um, but we'll--we'll--
12 -we'll--we'll--we'll go and--and we need to follow
13 up, but thank you very much for being here and for
14 your testimony. And then is it your grandfather that
15 is was a City Council Member?

16 PAUL CARR: Tenehey (sp). Yeah, Ed
17 Tenehey. He was--this is back when they called by
18 all their names.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

20 PAUL CARR: Um, it was right here in
21 District 1--and they (sic)

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Wonderful.

23 PAUL CARR: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

KEITH CARR: Good afternoon Chairman Levin and members of the committee. My name is Keith Carr. I'm the Healthy Neighborhoods Manager for City Harvest for Bed-Stuy and the Republic of Brooklyn. Thank you today for this hearing and your attention to addressing hunger and food insecurity. I know you're familiar with City Harvest, and the work that we do with food rescue and supporting soup kitchens and food pantries, but I'm here today to really talk about my work in the Bed-Stuy community, particularly my experiences within the food retail environment. Um, over the past several months, City Harvest has launched two community partner mobile markets. It's a new approach that we have to distributing more food directly to the people that really need it. City Harvest sources and delivers the food for these markets. We give away three produce items at each, um, community partner market and help manage to route free distributions of produce. In October, we launched the Fort Greene-Farragut Fresh Pantry with Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project as well as the Ebbets Field Market with the Crown Heights Youth Collective, and these are also in partnerships with your colleague Laurie Cumbo. There markets are an

offshoot of City Harvest Mobile Market free distributions of produce where we give away five different produce items. We've been doing that since 2004 as part of our Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative, and it's our way to clearly alleviate access to food in low--in low-access food--low access areas of food retail that have a scarcity of emergency food providers. We have nine bi-monthly City Harvest upgraded mobile markets across the five boroughs through which we distributed more than 11 million pounds of produce to date. Some of my colleagues and community partners and myself are increasingly concerned about the alarming trend--Barbara Turk spoke about this earlier--supermarket closings happening all over the city. Any stand-alone sort of supermarket is like a--a cherry to be picked by a retail developer. Most recently in my neighborhoods the 325 Lafayette Key Food, it's a family-owned store that had been there for like 30 years, a fantastic produce department, fantastic seafood. I shop there. Tish James shops there. Ken Desley (sic). Everybody shops there. Um, but that store was slated for a development, and has since closed. But the community sort of rallied under the support of Public

Advocate James and Assemblyman Walter Mosley. They hosed three town hall meeting that drew about 2 to 300 people. In attendance were Congressman Jeffries, as well as Comptroller Scott Stringer, State Senator Montgomery and Council Member Laurie Cumbo. As I testified at one of the town halls, I said that we can't have the local health of the communities to be--having a detrimental--be detrimentally affected by rapid development of--of real estate and limiting residents to the access to healthy food. So after a successful letter writing campaign, petitioning the developer operated the store. [bell] The operator at first he said he didn't want them to come there at all. Okay. Okay, he didn't want the store come to come back at all. He had someone else in mind to go that had a better match for his luxury high-rise, but, um, through negotiation everything he offered them the lease at four times what they were normally paying. Now, he's agreed to give them the lease of two times. So the community won. The store is going to be able to come back in 2017, and also you've probably heard about the recent closing of the 125th Street Pathmark. Um, we would like for the Council to look at that for other uses of that property. I

know it's private property and--but, things can happen if people--as we've seen from these examples. And I think Barbara Turk spoke about the, um, associated up in Washington Heights. I just learned that that store through efforts of Advocate James as well as Councilman Rodriguez that that store-- Walgreens has backed off, and they're going to allow the Associated to stay there. So, organizing works. Community has power.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It cert--it certainly does. I heard Councilman Rodriguez on the Brian Lehrer (sic) Show yesterday about this very things.

KEITH CARR: Yeah, I got you, and there are other remarks and what--given a chance to talk about WIC regulations and how they'll affect local businesses, but also access, um, for people in disadvantaged communities to healthier foods.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you and look forward to--to working with--working with you and continuing up the--continuing the dialogue.

KEITH CARR: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay.

KEITH CARR: Thank you.

ARIEL SARVANSKY: Good morning. Well, afternoon actually. My name is Ariel Sarvansky, Policy Associate for Food and Economic Security at the Citizens Committee of Children. I would like to thank Chair Levin and the members of the City Council Committee on General Welfare for holding today's hearing about hunger in New York City. We're grateful for all the work that's been done to fight poverty and increasing workers' access to healthy, affordable food. Unfortunately, the need to address hunger has not decreased since the last hunger oversight hearing in November 2014. We know that poverty rates continue to be extremely high, and 1.4 million including 400,000 children live in food insecure households. I'd like just make the following recommendations to ensure that the city continues to fight against poverty and hunger. The first has to do with working to increase school meal participation rates. School meals are very critical resources considering that 75% of public school students qualify for free and reduced price meals. Regarding Breakfast After the Bell, CCC would like to suggest that the city use appropriate oversight to ensure successful rollout of this program. We also

urge the city to develop a plan to provide Breakfast After the Bell in middle and high school as well as in elementary school. We are thankful for the Council's support of the Universal Lunch Program but would like to see that program expanded to elementary schools and high school students as well. We also hope to see increased efforts in middle schools to make parents and caregivers aware that the Universal School Lunch exists in their schools as many are not even aware that lunch is free for their students. In terms of summer meals, we are very pleased to see increased outreach by the DOE this past summer in the form of ads in subways and on bus--the sides of buses as well as the mobile app. But participation rates have not increased, and summer lunch participation actually went down. So we suggest publicizing meal site locations earlier, coordinate with DYCD that identify where summer camps will be, and conducting even more outreach. Additionally, we are pleased with the work being done by the DOE to continue to improve the quality of school food. But urge the city leaders to continue to support these important efforts including in the form of school gardens and nutrition programs. As has been mentioned, mentioned

a lot previously, um, we would like to see the strengthening of the Anti-Hunger Safety Net Program, which are all those struggling with student security including increased outreach for snacks, as well as increased funding for EFAP. We are also very pleased with the initiative such as those that Keith was discussing previously, um, to serve residents with immediate access to healthy, affordable food such as Green Cards, Fresh, Building Healthy Communities, and the creation of the Center for Health Equity. We hope the city continues to invest in these efforts as well as well as work to expand on them as they are so important in bringing food and resources where they're most needed. Lastly, we know that food insecurity and economic insecurity go hand in hand, and many New Yorkers struggle [bell] to ensure that their families can eat, and have financial security. For these reasons, we're very supportive of the recent minimum wage increase, as well as the new paid parental leave policy (sic) and we hope that these important initiatives will be expanded.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much, and I'll certainly be going through the entire testimony from CCC, and I want to thank this--

KEITH CARR: Could I say one just to follow-up on something.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Just--just speak into the microphone please.

KEITH CARR: Okay. I just wanted to follow up on something that Barbara Turk brought up about the fresh produce.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Just if you could identify yourself for the record so that--

KEITH CARR: Okay. Keith Carr, City Harvest, Healthy Neighborhoods, Manager for Bed-Stuy. Um, we're--we're looking--really looking at the work that the Fresh Program is doing NYCEDC Fresh. Um, and thanking that perhaps with the Council's suggestion that they could enhance there, um, how they work with--with, um, their funding to not just support attracting new supermarkets, but preserving the supermarkets that are already here. Um, and with the Council's backing I think that could do go a long way. I mean just in--within the last five years they've only worked with ten stores, and they could do a whole lot more to preserve stores that are closing.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: It may be time to
adjust the strategy--

KEITH CARR: [interposing] Yeah

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --to meet the needs
of the current--

KEITH CARR: [interposing] Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --um, lay of the
land. Yeah, so thank you. Yes, sir.

KEITH CARR: I'm Paul Carr, GHMC.
[coughs] Real quick, on the HRA with writing the
coding. I already have that--I write it up. (sic) I
know this Council gives money, um, to--to try and
help people with their new trades. It's specifically
coding, um, as well as I know about eight people that
know how to code, and I'm really going to do it
myself. Maybe HRA wants to reach out with some of
their own benefits of their programs, because they
actually--we may have the skill set needed to
actually get the job done a lot sooner, and look
into, you know, actually old clients with their
survey. Instead of outsourcing this money to an
organization that's going to turn around and charge
these an astronomical amount of money that we as

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE 140
2 users are like well, what is--this doesn't make sense
3 on how to use this profile. Thank you.
4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yep, thank. Maybe
5 that's good suggestion. Thank you very much to this
6 panel. Next--the next panel [pause] Um, the next
7 panel, um, Patrick Jean-Baptiste from Masbia; Lisa
8 Levy, New York Coalition Against Hunger; Liz Accles
9 from Community Food Advocates; and Anthony Butler
10 from Saint John's Bread and Life, and then there's
11 one more panel after that. [pause] [background
12 comments]
13 PATRICK JEAN-BAPTISTE: Sorry about that,
14 Council. I apologies.
15 MALE SPEAKER: Even props.
16 MALE SPEAKER: I didn't bring any props.
17 PATRICK JEAN-BAPTISTE: Yeah.
18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: He's got the good
19 stuff.
20 PATRICK JEAN-BAPTISTE: Yes, I do, sir.
21 FEMALE SPEAKER: Did you bring
22 Manischewitz
23 PATRICK JEAN-BAPTISTE: Um, no, ma'am.
24 Can you hear me? Is it clear?
25 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes, sir.

PATRICK JEAN-BAPTISTE: All right. Um, first off, I want to start by thanking Councilman Mr. Steven-Stephen Levin, the Chair of the General Welfare Community--Committee for being magnanimous enough to give myself and Masbia Soup Kitchen this great opportunity to come here today, and talk about some issues that not only us in Masbia, but many soup kitchens face here in New York City. As was already told, my name is Patrick Jean-Baptiste, and I've been involved with the Masbia family since 2012. I used to volunteer for a long time, but now I'm currently the site coordinator at our Flatbush location in Brooklyn. Masbia is a soup kitchen network comprised of three locations in the Boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn. We serve over 1.5 million meals every year and it's growing. We pride ourselves in serving our guests with dignity by creating a restaurant atmosphere in our kitchens. Anyone, it doesn't matter who they are, is able to receive a hot kosher meal with no questions asked. Since Masbia is a volunteer based organization, we depend on over 1,000 weekly hours of volunteer service in order to operate. We also distribute pantry packages every Thursday to cover the meals for the weekend since

we're closed Friday and Saturday because of the Sabbath. Our clientele continues to grow every year. So now more and more people are in need of our help. Over 1-1/2 million people in New York City are at risk of going hungry. So we hope that these valid points can help improve or at least you better insight on the issues that we encounter on a daily basis. So herein Exhibit A, you're able to see a 350% increase in our meal counts from our pantry and dinner services over the last three fiscal years. The amount of meals served has been increasing every year at our location--at all of our locations. Although we have locations in two boroughs, it does not actually represent like the total population in need. When you look at the grand perspective like New York City. So we've got some recommendations. Soup kitchens should receive direct funding to purchase their own food. From our point of view, directly receiving and spending our own funding instead of relying on the city to do all of the purchasing is the best way to many of our systematic problems. The government creates their list of foods--the federal government creates their list of foods available for emergency food programs based on

what food, and it's based on a price stabilization program. It's understand that EFAP, the federal program, offers a range of proteins. For example, like peanut butter, beans, can stew, tuna, et cetera. According to My Plate Guidelines shown here on Exhibit D, both peanut butter and tuna fulfill the same point requirement for the protein category. [bell] For tuna, it is--what does it place it comes it?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] That is--

PATRICK JEAN-BAPTISTE: Tuna is more expensive peanut. If the goal is to have enough food for everybody, then isn't it logical to buy cheaper protein since EFAP does not have to do price stabilization on a limited budget. Was does EFAP need all of this variety in their selections? Also, spending--EFAP does not procure products that needs to comply with the My Plate portion sizes. By comparing My Plate in Exhibit B with the items in Exhibit C, it's basically the grape juice and the tuna. That's what it is. You can see that we received 2 ounce tuna packets, but the serving serve for one point is 5 ounces. So we have a problem with

2 ounces. We need 5 ounces. So some weeks we only can give out two. Some weeks luckily we can give out three but we can't give out five. I know four is less than five, six is more than five. So, that's kind of a problem, right. The same problem is with the grape juice. The minimum amount of juice that we give for one point is 46. So it's 46 to 48 ounces. Grape juice is only 32. So that means we have to give people a bottle and a half or, you know, at least in common sense two bottles. So that's another problem. Also, EFAP knows our clientele size. So why do they give us these hard to use amounts that it just baffles me. The discrepancy of the required product sizes a small quantity just gives us more problems than we already have being a soup kitchen. Aside from the problem of the food sizes, the types of food that they give us really contradicts the overarching goals for the health of the city. Yes, they do use produce. Yes, it is promoted. Yes, as someone already mentioned, EBT is at green markets to promote fresh produce for low-income families. But how come when it comes to the city, this program for low-income families, they only use shelf stable items for soup kitchens. Not only is fresh produce better

than canned goods, it's also more clean to our clients. I remember as a kid I used to just get canned vegetables, and yes, definitely a difference than having something fresh on the table. So also buying the food in bulk is not very cost-effective. You know, all the transportation that the food bank and City Harvest does, the cost to deliver the food to individual locations it diminishes the money saved in actually buying bulk. In addition, buying in bulk for the purpose for the long-time use, the price is more than it is for a short term. The long-term price factors in the fluctuation in the market probably ends up being expensive than buying for actual use when we actually need it. We are also not notified of what of when the delivery will be sent. This is a problem since--because we need 1,000 hours of volunteers every week to help us, they don't--I mean I have enough volunteers that day to unload the items. The food bank does call us when we've got a delivery, but we never know if EFAP is going to be added. So someone already mentioned EFAP members receive direct cash for utilities. That part you basically could read. It's a couple of sentences. If the system doesn't change the direct funding--

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Mr. Jean, I'm going to ask you to kind of summarize, um, your testimony, if that's possible.

PATRICK JEAN-BAPTISTE: Oh, okay. So basically, what we want the city to do is to help us with certain things like with the garbage. Why can't the city just pick up our garbage? Why do we have to pay private companies to--to pick up our garbage? Also, they don't recycle. So, it's not really environmentally efficient.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Uh-huh.

PATRICK JEAN-BAPTISTE: Also, why do we have to have so many--obviously, the food is helpful, but if you don't have to follow the standard EFAP, why can't you just give us the most of demand for food? So, if it's protein, why does it have to be tuna? Why can't you just give us like more peanut butter or something like, more of something that could feed people. Um, also, the--also the thing is why does the Department of Health always gives us like different types of inspections? We have no problem with inspections, but the bigger problem is people that are going hungry and the biggest, biggest problem that everyone is here for is EFAP the budget

has to raise. \$10 million is simply not enough. It's \$6.00 per person. I know that the city can raise it to higher. I don't know how much higher, but let's be practical. It's not enough to feed the homeless. So, I suggest that the City do something to raise the money, because we really need the help. That's all. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much for your testimony [applause] and for all the work you do.

LISA LEVY: My name is Lisa Levy and I'm the Director of Policy Advocacy and Organizing with the New York City Coalition Against Hunger. First, I want to thank Chair Levin for his work on behalf of people in need as well as the committee for inviting us here today. Thank you to Commissioner Banks and HRA for their testimony and efforts in increasing SNAP outreach. As many of you know, and as many--as you can read in my submitted testimony, there are about 1.67 million people who relied on SNAP benefits in November 2016, according to HRA. In spite of recent economic improvements, one in six New York City residents still struggle to put food on the table. This number includes approximately one in

five children, and one in eight seniors right here in one of the richest cities in the world. In addition, more than 1.7 million New Yorkers lived below the federal poverty level in 2014. That's \$19,790 for a family of three. Add to this the reality is that nearly half of all working age New York State and New York City residents who can't afford enough food live in households where at least one person is employed. In New York City 48% of all adults between 15 and 65 who were food insecure, were employed. For many of us, hunger is hard to imagine. I speak to many of those who it affects regularly. Just head up to the Bronx, and you can meet Olga Blanco who doesn't live far from Yankee Stadium with her six-year-old daughter. Ms. Blanco receives SNAP benefits and Medicaid. Often, her SNAP benefits run out before the end of the month. So she receives food from a local food pantry like many others. From June to November she purchased fresh food--fresh produce from the--with her SNAP EBT Card from New York City Coalition Against Hunger's Community Support Agriculture Program generously supported by City Council funding, which allows people from a variety of incomes to purchase healthy produce from farmers.

This produce has proven that when healthy is available to people at affordable prices, people of low they will take advantage of it. Also, in the Bronx in Morris Heights is Margarita Martinez, the mother of two daughters, one in college and one in high school. Ms. Martinez and her husband also rely on SNAP and food pantries despite being employed. She works in construction, and has spoken about how difficult it is to put food on the table with older children when earning low wages. She also relies on--on our CSA program, but with low wages she continues to struggle. Over on Staten Island we have Barbara Hart, a mother and grandmother who lives in New Brighton. She relies on SNAP and Medicaid as well as the assistance of food pantries. Two days before Thanksgiving, I spoke with her as she ate lunch at Project Hospitality, a food pantry and kitchen, and she told me that she planned to spend the holiday both volunteering and eating the food that the emergency food providers generously shared with her and her family. Lastly, we have Jose Gutierrez, who lives with his wife and daughters in the Bronx. As a food--as a restaurant worker he doesn't earn enough to support his family. So he relies on SNAP benefits

as well as food pantries knowing that his kids can eat [bell] nutritious-- May I just finish? Knowing that his kids can eat a nutritious breakfast and lunch at school is a relief, but he continues to advocate for them, and for these important programs at their--as their school's PTA President. He, too, is a CFA member, and appreciates the affordable nutritious produce that is delivered throughout the summer. These are just a few of the stories about the people that I've been privileged to know because of my work at NYCCA. These folks aren't statistics. They are individuals who make choices everyday to put food on the table, pay their bills and make it in the city that they call home just like each one of us. I'm here to present a picture of hunger in New York City as well as to ask each of you as policymakers to do all that you can to make sure that no child, no senior, no New Yorker goes hungry. Hunger is not inevitable, nor is poverty. Each of us has power to make change by supporting the programs that work, SNAP, WIC, school and summer meals and increasing the minimum wage. Thank you again for taking the time to hold this important hearing, and for listening.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much.

ANTHONY BUTLER: Good afternoon. First, allow me to thank--thank you for this opportunity to testify. I'm always kind of edified that in this big complex city we can participate in the--in the kind of political future of the city. I'm sure by now you've heard or will--or have heard over the last three hours the statistics on hunger in the city, the one in six who use emergency food providers; the one in four children who cannot get enough to eat; the 1.8 million New Yorkers who relay on SNAP and emergency food. You may--an interesting thing I read that you may be aware that the poor in Costa Rica have a longer life expectancy than the poor in the city--in the richest city in the world. There is significant data on future learning, developmental and social deficits that will develop in those toddlers and children who are unable to receive proper nutrition, and these are deficits that are both costly to our society and can never be corrected. You've heard that because of SNAP cuts, there's a monthly meal loss of over 5.3 million meals, and how much--the stories of how food pantries repeatedly run out of food, and the increased demand that 90% of our food pantries face this year.

Myself, I mean I've introduced myself as Anthony Butler, the Executive Director of St. John's Bread and Life, and as that Executive Director, we face these problems daily, distribute over a million meals annually through our digital food pantry, our hot meal program, our dining room and our mobile soup kitchen. We have to raise over 90% of our funding because of the dearth of government funding. That's over \$3 million a year I have to raise to feed people. When we were talking earlier, funding \$14 million, I privately raised almost a quarter of that compared to what the city is giving out emergency food providers. Creating jobs in the community. We teach nutrition and cooking classes, provide medical services frequently to the undocumented and uninsured; immigration services to several thousand folks to help them get a leg up. Kind of move into the mainstream culture. We help our guests procure useful and government approved identification so they can navigate the city and not be blocked from the opportunities that they might encounter. We host a few tax program that helped thousands and brought in over \$3 million last year into the local economy in Bed-Stuy. What you may not be aware of is, um,

Angelo, one of our clients is working full-time at the airport. He's working actually at Kennedy. He has two kids ready to go into school, and his wife is working part time. They still come to our food pantry week because they don't make enough money to feed both his wife and his family. I have a woman who I was talking to yesterday Kamisha. She's a single mother with two children. She's going to a community college and working part-time. She lives in a shelter and needs our food pantry to help her children and herself eat. These are the silent voices. We hear about the seconds--you know, the two cities, but these are the silent voices in this second city. They're part of this 1.8, 1.7 million who rely on emergency food. They are not the several thousand visible homeless who attracted the attention of city government recently simply because they inconvenienced those with means. They're not the untreated mentally ill person who through a failure of a heavily, though, inadequately funded safety net becomes a nuisance in the community. They're not the violent drug dealer in the projects who holds the community hostage . They are the backbone of our community in our city. They're the people who work,

provide our services, feed, us, probably work in this building, keep our children safe, keep our city clean. Yet, they're assisted, as we heard, by less than one percent of the budget. It was interesting to note this morning that all of the talk was essentially on \$14 million the city is giving and the rest was actually on federal money, the SNAP money. It was not any city money. It was great to provide access, but in terms of what's being done, I think a great deal has to be done to do this. It's an incredible inequality. I ask you to raise this funding above subsistence levels. We can talk about minimum wage, we talk about all that, but we have people going hungry now, and we need to deal with that. So, as we progress forward, I encourage you to do that. Thank you. [applause]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Butler, and I just want to--so I just--I broke it down a little bit. So you raise \$3 million a year?

ANTHONY BUTLER: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So that is \$57,692 every week that you raise private and \$8,219 a day--

ANTHONY BUTLER: [interposing] You got it.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --you have to raise
3 privately. [applause]

4 ANTHONY BUTLER: I can get any--

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Every
6 day.

7 ANTHONY BUTLER: I can get anybody up.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: 365 days a year.

9 ANTHONY BUTLER: Well, some days--some
10 days--

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] Some
12 day are better.

13 ANTHONY BUTLER: --some days are better.
14 You know, it's--it's all like that, you know.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [interposing] But
16 still.

17 ANTHONY BUTLER: October, yeah, it's an
18 incredible--it's an incredible burden, um, to have to
19 do that and worry about it, and none of it's
20 predictable funding.

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

22 ANTHONY BUTLER: So, yeah, that money,
23 just a--it's--of that \$3 million about half is
24 private individuals and the other half are
25 foundations.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And--and your--your
colleagues in Bed-stuy, um, that's that Campaign
Against Hunger--

ANTHONY BUTLER: [interposing] Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --does similar
numbers--

ANTHONY BUTLER: [interposing] Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --and when I visited
them last year, I was astounded by that--by that same
fact and if it was for, um, um, private philanthropy
and individual donors--

ANTHONY BUTLER: [interposing] Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: --and foundations,
um, then we--we would be in a--a serious bind here in
New York.

ANTHONY BUTLER: You would have--we would
be--not to be too coarse, but we would be in San
Paolo or something. We would have covellos (sic) and
we would have a city like that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yep. Right.

ANTHONY BUTLER: Yeah, yeah, we wouldn't
have any of that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

2 ANTHONY BUTLER: No, food bank. Any--all
3 of us would not be here.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah. So let's keep
5 that in mind.

6 ANTHONY BUTLER: Yeah, so--

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

8 ANTHONY BUTLER: Yep.

9 And I just want to say as the oldest
10 person in this room, I remember when we didn't have
11 food banks and food pantries and soup kitchens. Um,
12 so, it's--it's been really quite incredible. I'm
13 Agnes Momar from Community Food Advocates and I'm
14 representing our Executive Director Liz Accles. She
15 had to leave, and I am not going to read testimony.
16 You have it and really what I want to say is that our
17 mission, I've been a food advocate, an anti-hunger
18 advocate for over 30 years, and we've always said
19 that hunger is something easy to resolve. You can't
20 resolve homelessness without a lot of money, but
21 hunger is easy. And, in fact, we have a lot of
22 federal programs that we are not taking advantage of
23 that could do a lot to ease hunger, and I know that
24 we've talked about SNAP a lot, and there are a lot of
25 restrictions on why you can or cannot use SNAP. But

particularly hunger does not have to be in our school children, and there are no restrictions on any child eating or not eating that food, and it's mostly federally funded. Mainly the last five years or more that's what we've been trying to promote. How do we get every child in our school to take advantage of the federal food program without charge, and the city can afford it. And, they've done a very limited job in the middle schools to provide universal meals. But why aren't we feeding every single child in our New York City schools without asking them to pay or stigmatizing, categorizing, and we can do it. The federal government wants us to do it, and unfortunately, I don't know what is holding up powers in this city, why they don't want to do it. And I know--I know you guys, Chairman Levin and your colleagues have been very supportive. How do we pressure the city to do this? It's simple. It will do a lot to help these kids. Three-quarters of our public school kids are poor, which is a sad statement in itself. Um, how do we get the city to do it? And that's our plea to you, and read our numbers, and hopefully we can do something together. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you and thank you for the good work that you do. Thank you to this entire panel for the good work that you do. Um, and yes we have our work cut out for us, and, you know, certainly, um, you know, there's strides over the last two years, and we're very happy to be working with the Administration that is a collaborative with us, but we haven't gotten all the way there, and there is still work to be done. And so let's--let's continue to keep doing it. Thank you. The final panel Anita Fein of St. Edward Food Pantry, Stuart Cohen of COJO, Staten Island, and Rashida Latef of West Side Campaign Against Hunger, and I apologize if I got anybody's name wrong. [pause] Whoever wants to start. Oh, turn on the mic and identify yourself for the record, please.

ANITA FEIN: Okay. Thank you very much Council Member for holding this hearing and allowing us to testify about hunger in New York and how we see it. My name is Anita Fein. I am the Executive Director of the St. Edward Food Pantry located in Pleasant Plains Staten Island. St. Edward is the most southern food pantry in New York. You've got a 1928 as --as a ministry, as the Franciscan hand

maidens of Mary's sisters. The sisters have been feeding the poor since 19--I'm sorry--have been feeding the poor and those in need in South Shore of Staten Island. As the client's choice food pantry, we serve healthy nutritious meals to families who come--are in need from across the island. Clients come across the island willing to take two to three busses just to get food from us to feed their families. Of the 4,900 families we serve, 52% live in the communities of Tottenville, Pleasant Plains, Annandale, Eltingville, Great Hills, just to name a few of the South Shore communities where they live. In the past, it was thought that people who lived in those communities were affluent, and not in need of our services. Times have changed. Due to the changing economy, rising food costs, housing, increase in utilities and transportation costs creating what is now called the working poor. St. Edward has 43% of its client who receive SNAP benefits but between the massive cuts to SNAP benefits endured by our clients in November 2013 and rising costs overall, there has been a surge not only in new clients, but the return of many clients who stopped coming to our pantry in need of emergency

food. With the new clientele, there's been increased requests from people seeking SNAP benefits. However, it is a real sin when people who are working cannot afford to feed their families, and have to turn to emergency food programs such as ours in order to put food on their tables. The number of people coming to our food pantry has been steadily increasing over the years. In 2013, we served just over 20,000. In 2014, it was 22,200 and 2015 it was nearly 24,000 adults, children and elderly looking for food. What we are looking from the City is additional funding through HRA's EFAP. Ours is not the only food program who has seen an increase in the number of people coming to our pantry. Throughout the city all the soup kitchens and food pantries have been, are seeing increased numbers. Some are even running out of food due to the sheer volume of people coming to the--to coming to their--to them. At present St. Edward Food Pantry like many of the emergency food programs in New York City receive EFAP funding twice a year in accordance with the fiscal year of the city. Currently, EFAP allocates what is sent to each feeding program. However, each feeding program does not have a choice of what--the type nor the frequency

of food delivered. We are sent specific items from a predetermined list of foods and food bank distributes to the various food programs citywide per HRA. There are two problems with this. For a pantry the size of St. Edward, which operates out of two tractor-trailer shipping [bell] containers, we never know what our monthly allocation for food is from this funding source nor when. Given our storage space, it's difficult to control inventory when we do not have any choice over EFAP. We've gone to extremes to this from running low on items when food is sent to having too many items, or two orders--I'm sorry, two orders back to back. As a client choice program, that says dignity to determine EFAP orders not next--do not need--I'm sorry. Do not allow needed flexibility nor allowances for what we have distributed in a month. There is only one solution to this. Allowing emergency food programs to pick and choose from the food bank's inventory using our EFAP monthly allocation. In the past, EFAP recipients were able to choose--I'm sorry--to order items of our choosing during the second half of the year through a food bank. In this case, our clients were satisfied. Another--one final--and you can read the rest of it

in my testimony when time runs out. Is for funding to be given to emergency food providers for general operation support. Many of us pay rent for our facilities and utilities, which has been increasing over the years. In addition, in order to run the food pantry property--properly, some organizations like St. Edward have part-time staff, which is necessary. Thank you again for letting me speak on behalf of St. Edward Foot Pantry. With the City's help and assistance we can continue to serve families who are coming to us in need. Along with the Food Bank for New York City, we help to strengthen the meal gap that exists now in Staten Island with the entire city of New York.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much for your testimony, and thank you very much for the work that you do.

ANITA FEIN: Thank you. [pause]

RASHIDA LATEF: We're good now. Good afternoon. My name is Rashida Latef. I'm the Advocacy Coordinator at the West Side Campaign Against Hunger. So you had my last name right the first time. [laughs] West Side Campaign Against Hunger would like to thank Council Member Levin,

Chair of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Fiscal Year 2017 Preliminary New York City Budget, and specifically, the need to increase funding for the city's Emergency Food Assistance Program, more commonly known as EFAP. Founded in 1979, West Side Campaign Against Hunger or WSCAH, is an innovative supermarket style food pantry that combines access to healthy food with support services, job training and policy advocacy to help stabilize clients and put them on a path to self-sufficiency. In the last year, we have provided 1.5 million pounds of healthy food for more than 1.1 million meals for 43,042 families. We also helped 787 families enroll in SNAP, 554 enroll in the health insurance, and 153 people obtain employment. In all, our counselors helped our clients secure \$7.5 million in public benefits. Since the start of the Great Recession in 2008, the number of visitors to the pantry has grown by 60%. EFAP funding has helped WSCAH to meet this growing need. Without increased funding, WSCAH, other emergency food providers and the people we serve will have even fewer resources to fight food insecurity. WSCAH serves a diverse population of

low-income New York City residents. Most of our clients live in Lower Manhattan and the South Bronx, but WSCAH is open to individuals and families across the city. Our clients include children, youth, adults, and older adults. In Fiscal Year 2015, 27% were 17 years old or under; 49% range from 18 to 54 years old, and 24% were 55 and older. 73% of our clients are Hispanic and 21% were African-American; 58% of our clients are female and 42% male. While WSCAH customers have diverse backgrounds, they have much in common. They all struggle to make ends meet and need an emergency allotment of food. Our customers face significant barriers to self-sufficiency, which include housing, health insurance, unemployment, behavior health issues, poor credit, criminal histories, lack of educational credentials, lack of marketable job skills and limited work experience. West Side Campaign Against Hunger and our anti-hunger allies strongly urge you to increase EFAP funding to \$15.3 million annually, and index the funding to inflation. EFAP is extremely important to WSCAH, emergency food providers throughout the city and our clients. Advocacy for increased funding as well as campaigns to expand school lunch, since the

Lunch for Learning program is crucial is crucial ending food insecurity. Lunch for Learning is a coalition of anti-hunger organizations and allies throughout New York City that advocate for the expansion--for the expansion of Universal Free School Lunch in all New York City public schools. Food insecure families fight hunger with the certainty that their child will receive a nutritious meal in school. With increased EFAP funding and Universal Free School Lunch in all New York City public schools, New York City residents [bell] New York City residents and emergency food providers will have more resources to effectively meet the ever-growing need of those who are food insecure. Once again, West Side Campaign Against Hunger would like to thank the City Council's General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to testify about the importance of increased funding for the emergency food program. Thank you.

STUART COHEN: I would like to thank both the General Welfare Committee and Chairman Stephen-- Steve Levin for the support for COJO's Kosher Food Pantry in Staten Island. Over the past 36 years, COJO Staten Island has been a central organization

for all Jewish organization of Staten Island. My name is Stuart Cohen. On October 4, 2014, I took over as Director of COJO Kosher Food Pantry and social services. After a little over a year, we increased the amount of people we served over 300%. We currently provide over 500 people per week with kosher meals including the customary chicken and gefilte fish for Shabatana. In the month of December alone this past year we fed over 36,000 meals to all communities. During this time, COJO received two awards. The first is the most improved food pantry in City Harvest, and the second one from Food Bank for the most referrals. Using your 10 Tracker (sic) that allows COJO to connect with our community through a variety of social services. In addition, COJO has eight interface communities a month at three different churches. We at COJO believe in feeding the whole community of Staten Island. If I had to recall one moment, it would have been this past Thanksgiving. We had two community dinners at two different churches. At the second dinner we came across a woman with four children who had no food, and we were able to give her enough food for two weeks making all of the hard work really possible.

2 At COJO with food banks with 10 Tracker, the system
3 will be able to provide more social service referrals
4 than any food pantry on Staten Island. Nevertheless,
5 we ask for the help of all City Council people,
6 elected official and the General Welfare Committee
7 people to help COJO Kosher Food Pantry to feed more
8 people with the help of any additional funding they
9 could support us with. Thank you again.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date January 17, 2016