

**Testimony Of Lisa Fitzpatrick, Chief Program Officer, New York City Human Resources  
Administration**

**New York City Council Committee on General Welfare, Hunger Hearing**

**January 13, 2016**

Good morning. I thank Chairperson Levin and the members of the City Council's General Welfare Committee for giving us this opportunity to testify today.

My name is Lisa Fitzpatrick and I am the Chief Program Officer for the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA). I am pleased to be here today to discuss many of the initiatives and programs that the de Blasio administration is undertaking to address food insecurity. Additionally, I will focus on HRA's role in ensuring that food assistance continues to be a vital, easily accessible support for low-income individuals and families. I'm joined today by Barbara Turk, the Director of Food Policy in the Office of the Mayor, and LaMaunda Maharaj, the Director of HRA's Emergency Food and Nutrition Assistance Program.

Hunger is a serious problem in New York City. According to the City's 2015 Food Metrics Report, 1.36 million New Yorkers, 16.5 percent of New York's population, were food insecure at some point during 2013, including nearly one in five children. Nationally, an estimated 15.8 percent (49 million Americans) were food insecure between 2013 – 2015.

Food insecurity is a result of unemployment, underemployment and low wages, and a consequence of growing income inequality. Chronic food insecurity 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 rates 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 long term employment with a living wage and thereby moving off 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, 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 FY15 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 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 of what's required to solve the problem of hunger. However, Congress's 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 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 AccessNYC, 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.

### **Making it Easier to Enroll In and Stay on SNAP**

To summarize, HRA has undertaken a major effort to reduce barriers to access. These initiatives include:

#### **Additional Staffing**

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

## New and Improved Technology

In 2015, we expanded our ability to allow low-income city residents to obtain and retain SNAP. Improvements include:

- Launching an enhanced AccessNYC. ACCENYC 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 also submit a recertification for SNAP benefits. This new and improved website is accessible in English and the six Local Law languages (Arabic, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian and Spanish).
- Expanding self-service areas to eight additional SNAP centers. This means there are now 13 SNAP centers and 10 community-based organizations where clients can quickly and easily submit requested documents electronically. Clients can also use the self-service areas to submit documentation in support of case changes such as the addition or removal of a family member, change in rent or address.
- Providing PC terminals located at all but one of HRA's SNAP Centers, allowing clients to use the ACCESSNYC portal to complete and submit SNAP applications. The last center is scheduled to have this technology later this year.
- Releasing the 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's launch, clients have uploaded more than 25,000 images. We firmly believe that mobile uploads and new internal systems will ensure documents are not lost upon submission by clients.
- 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.

## Continuing Outreach Efforts

HRA's Office of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Outreach Services (SNAP-OS) seeks educate the general public about SNAP benefit/food stamps eligibility guidelines, prescreen clients to determine potential eligibility, and assists applicants with the application process. In Fiscal Year 2015, this unit provided outreach services at more than 1,584 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 proficiency by 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 manages outstationed HRA staff at three community-based "Paperless Office System" sites that provide on-line 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 prescreened 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 English and the six Local Law languages throughout the city in locations such as on subways, buses, in check-cashing facilities, bodegas, etc. The campaign also includes digital advertisements and video testimonials of past or current SNAP clients and the various marketing materials have been distributed to community partners by the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA), the Department for the Aging (DFTA), and the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV). Multi-lingual marketing material was also distributed by HRA's own Community Affairs and Emergency Intervention Services/SNAP outreach teams, the Community Affairs Unit (CAU) in the Mayor's Office, at Senior Citizens Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) sign-up events and at Deferred Action citizenship events sponsored by MOIA. Within two months of 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.

### **HRA SNAP-Ed**

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 within a limited budget and choose more physically active lifestyles. Starting in FY15, New York State's Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) administers SNAP-Ed funding for numerous SNAP-Ed programs and activities of the Cornell Cooperative Extension. SNAP-Ed served 2,114,947 participants during FY 2014, including 251,737 through direct education and 1,863,210 indirectly through social media contacts and outreach events.

### **Senior Citizen Outreach**

Through a partnership started in September 2014, HRA, the Robin Hood Foundation, the Benefits Data Trust (BDT) and the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) 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 assistance, using enrollment data for the five boroughs and working with HRA to complement our outreach, the New York Benefits Center implemented a phone 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 them 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 in conjunction with the mailing;
- Screened via telephone 27,855 households for SNAP ;
- Began SNAP applications for 12,596 households; and
- Submitted 11,076 SNAP applications on AccessNYC.

### **Partnering with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)**

The Mayor's Action Plan (MAP) for Neighborhood Safety is a collaborative effort among NYCHA, eleven 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 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 are targeted as part of this program. Whether providing general information on HRA programs and services, assisting community residents with completing online applications for SNAP and Public Health Insurance, facilitating referrals to program offices, or troubleshooting case concerns, our goal is the same: to provide support to New Yorkers in need.

### **Partnering with DOHMH**

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 Health Bucks which can be used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at all farmers markets. For every five dollars customers spend with their EBT card, they receive a two-dollar Health Buck—representing a 40% increase in their purchasing power. This initiative allows SNAP recipients to buy nutritious and affordable produce while supporting regional and local farms.

### **Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP)**

The City supports the wide-range of services provided by food pantries and soup kitchens through HRA. In Fiscal Year 2016, HRA's Emergency Food Assistance Program's (EFAP) total funding for food and administrative expenses 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 FY 16 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 foods purchased with City funding 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 prescreening, assistance with the 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 NYC emergency food distributors to form the NYC 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 least 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 NYC Service's *Reducing Hunger Service Initiative* to assess and meet the skill-based volunteer needs of the emergency food network (soup kitchens and food pantries). This initiative includes engaging the network in expanded SNAP outreach services with the assistance of volunteers.

## **Conclusion**

SNAP and the Emergency Food Assistance Program, 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 waiver which allowed single able-bodied adults, also known as Able Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWDs), who are 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 had been covered by a waiver, but the improved economy means not all areas still qualify. We are working with the federal Department of Agriculture and the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance 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 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 fewer 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 an example for the state and other localities by raising the minimum wage for 50,000 City workers.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.



Testimony of Keith Carr, Manager, Healthy Neighborhoods, Brooklyn  
New York City Council Hearing of the  
Committee on General Welfare  
January 13, 2016

T2016-3928

Oversight: Hunger in New York City

Good morning Chairperson Levin and members of the committee. My name is Keith Carr and I am the Health Neighborhoods Manager at City Harvest for Bed-Stuy, in the Republic of Brooklyn. Thank you for holding this hearing today and for your attention to addressing hunger and food insecurity in New York City. I know you are familiar with the work that City Harvest does to rescue food and deliver it to soup kitchens and food pantries throughout the city, and I am eager to share with you some of my experiences of working in the Bed-Stuy community, primarily outside of the emergency food network. In particular, I'd like to highlight some of my work and experiences with the food retail environment.

While I come at my work through a lens of food's potential as a collaborative economic development and anti-hunger lever in Brooklyn, the issues of persistent hunger and lack of affordable, fresh produce touch every borough.

### Background

**City Harvest** pioneered food rescue in 1982 and, this year, will collect 55 million pounds of excess food to help feed the nearly 1.4 million New Yorkers struggling to put meals on their tables. Through relationships with farms, restaurants, grocers, and manufacturers, we collect nutritious food that would otherwise go to waste and delivers it free of charge to 500 soup kitchens, food pantries and other community food programs across the five boroughs. City Harvest takes a long-term approach to hunger relief through its Healthy Neighborhoods initiative. In communities with elevated rates of food insecurity, poverty and diet-related illnesses, we have developed programs and partnerships to increase the availability of affordable, fresh produce and inspire healthy, budget-conscious meal choices through nutrition education.

New York City is one of the most vibrant economic hubs in the world, but inside many homes, the reality is much different: nearly 1.4 million residents are food insecure, including nearly one in four children. Food insecurity is especially high in Bed Stuy, Brooklyn, at 27%, meaning that more than one in four residents does not always know where or when their next meal will come. Our Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative also includes the food insecure areas of the South Bronx (over 23%), Washington Heights/Inwood (19%), Northwest Queens (16%), and the North Shore of Staten Island (nearly 14%).

The past holiday season was an especially difficult time for families in need, which is why City Harvest is scaled up our work and encouraged others to help feed hungry people in New York City:

- We rescued 14 million pounds of food and deliver it free of charge to New Yorkers in need, between October and January.
- We distributed 12,000 turkeys across the five boroughs for Thanksgiving.

- We developed Community Partner Mobile Markets as a new way to distribute more food directly to the people who need it. City Harvest sources and delivers food for community partners and provides training for community members to manage free distributions of produce. In October we launched the Fort Greene and Farragut Fresh Pantry (with Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project) and Ebbets Field Market (with Crown Heights Youth Collective). These markets are an offshoot of City Harvest's Mobile Market free distributions of fresh produce that began in 2004 as part of our Healthy Neighborhoods initiative and are a new approach to alleviate need in areas that have low access to retail and scarcity of emergency food providers.
- We have nine bi-monthly City Harvest-operated Mobile Markets across the five boroughs and we have distributed over 11 million pounds of produce to date through these markets.

Food costs have increased across New York City by 59% since 2000, while the median earnings of working adults have increased by only 17%.<sup>1</sup> City Harvest's network of soup kitchens and food pantries has seen 1.3 million more visits since last year. (Feed NYC) Despite reports of a strengthening economy, 2.7 million men, women and children lack the income needed to cover basic necessities like food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and healthcare.<sup>2</sup> Food is seen as an elastic expense; to save money for other things families often skimp on nutritious meals and turn to unhealthy, less expensive choices.<sup>3</sup> Food pantries and soup kitchens in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island are opening their doors for hundreds of thousands more visits than they did last year. Our network of community food programs in the Bronx has seen a 28% increase in visits over last year. (Across all boroughs, there was an 8% increase) (FeedNYC) For many New Yorkers, having a full time job does not guarantee the ability to pay for basic needs.<sup>4</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> Pearce, D. (2014). Overlooked and Undercounted: The Struggle to Make Ends Meet in New York City. Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington: Seattle, WA.

<sup>2</sup> Pearce, D. (2014).

<sup>3</sup> Pearce, D. (2014).

<sup>4</sup> Pearce, D. (2014).

### Healthy Retail Environment

City Harvest's Healthy Retail program provides supermarkets and bodegas with on-going individualized training as well as marketing and merchandising support to makeover produce sections. We work with store managers to improve the quality and cleanliness of produce sections, update store layouts to strategically place produce sections at store entrances, and provide new signage and display cases to make produce items more attractive to consumers. This year, we will work with more than 98 stores (48 supermarkets and 50 corner stores), increasing access to fresh produce for 435,000 people. Despite these successes, we are increasingly concerned about the alarming trend of supermarket closures happening in areas of increased development with a lot of food insecurity. In the last two years we have lost two of our "Healthy Supermarkets" in Bed-Stuy to housing development projects and two other stores have closed in the last year. Only one of these projects is completed and the original store (Associated) has reopened in October 2015 as a Key Food was slated to reopen in August, while the other three sites have yet to break ground, leaving these areas without a nearby full service grocery store.

The most recent closing was the 325 Lafayette Avenue Key Food, a family owned store with an amazing produce section and affordable prices who had been in their location for 30-plus years. The developers who bought the land said that there was no plan for the Key Food in the soon-to-be-developed luxury high-rise building, which caused a major public outcry. The store and their loyal customers rallied, including many local elected officials who live nearby and shop at the store themselves. Public Advocate Letitia James and Assemblyman Walter Mosley hosted three town hall meetings drawing 200-300 people, including Congressmen Hakeem Jeffries, NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer, State Senator Velmanette Montgomery and Councilmember Laurie Cumbo.

I testified at the town hall to the effect this store closing would have on the health of the local community and how the trend of rapid development is impacting and limiting residents' access to healthy food. After a successful letter writing and petition campaign, the developer offered the store operator a lease (first, for four times the previous price, and finally for twice that amount) once the project is completed in 2017. This type of grassroots action is an example of what can be done at the community level, but we must think with a legislative and regulatory mind to support city residents in their quest for healthy, affordable food in their neighborhoods.

An additional challenge to access at supermarkets and bodegas is the coming amendment to Sections 60-1.1 and 1.13 of Title 10 NYCRR at the New York State Department of Health. If passed, New York State's women and children who qualify for *The Supplementary Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children* (WIC Program) will have a decreased ability to put good, healthy food on their tables. The new zip code quotas, the 1-year waiting periods, and \$5 million exemptions for supermarkets and bodegas are all potentially damaging to our already food insecure communities. Since we do not yet understand the potential effect this rule change would have, City Harvest submitted comments to the Regional Affairs Unit in November 2015 urging a pause on the proposed rule change and take time to review the impact such an amendment would have on New York State's mothers and children, and on the stores where they shop.

Small businesses are the foundation of local economies. New York City's thousands of corner stores and bodegas are no exception. These stores are often minority- and immigrant-owned, and they create jobs for their neighbors. Critically, more money spent at these stores stays within the community, fostering a cycle of economic reinvestment and growth. We look forward to working with the Council to support these small business and continued access to healthy, affordable food by their neighbors.

#### Coalitions & Initiatives

##### *Bed-Stuy Community Action Network (CAN)*

The Bed Stuy Community Action Network (CAN) wants to help families find better ways of accessing, buying and growing food that will improve their health. Our mission is to reduce diet-related illness of Bed Stuy's under-resourced residents and communities of color, through information sharing, programmatic collaborations, partnerships with community leaders and organizations, and advocating for changes to the policy that will improve the food landscape to increase the consumption of fresh local foods. We are working toward a vision of a local food system based on sustainable, regional and hyper local agriculture that fosters the local economy, sustains local businesses and assures Bed Stuy residents have access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food from a variety of sources.

### *Healthy Food Retail Networking Group*

City Harvest is a founding member of the Healthy Food Retail Networking Group (HFRNG), which is a citywide collaboration of over 40 organizations working to coordinate efforts of healthy food retail practitioners and advocates to improve the food landscape in brick and mortar retail venues across NYC. Former City Harvest employee Sheilah Crowley was instrumental in starting this group and the annual Fresh Food Retail Summit. As a component of the HFRNG, an Advocacy committee has been meeting monthly to determine goals for 2016 to present to the quarterly full HFRNG meeting in January 2016.

### *New York City Alliance for Child Nutrition Reauthorization*

Convened by City Harvest and the Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy Teachers College Columbia University, the New York City Alliance for Child Nutrition Reauthorization (NYC4CNR) is a group of diverse stakeholders working together for a strong Child Nutrition Act. The Child Nutrition Act (CNA) covers school meals, summer meals, Women Infants and Children funding, and other programs that feed children. City Harvest is working to inform NYC4CNR members of CNA-related news, hold events with elected officials and advocates, and share our 2015 priorities document specific to New York City that informs advocacy with local and national partners. We would like the Committee to consider passing Resolution 0936 “Renewal of the Child Nutrition Act and the WIC Reauthorization Act” as a council-wide show of support for this important legislation. We look forward to working with the City Council on CNA priorities for New York City in 2016.

### *Lunch 4 Learning*

City Harvest is proud to be a partner of the Lunch 4 Learning campaign. Spearheaded by Community Food Advocates, the campaign is a broad, diverse coalition-based campaign working towards making free and healthy school meals available to all New York City public school students, regardless of income. The campaign believes that universal free and healthy school meals eliminate the poverty stigma associated with school lunch, get more students eating, and have far reaching citywide impact on childhood hunger, public health, and educational outcomes. Currently, 250,000 of the 780,000 students who are eligible for free or reduced priced meals do not participate. The Lunch 4 Learning campaign is mobilizing organizations and individuals citywide to elevate universal free and healthy school meals and focus the attention of the Mayor, Chancellor and City Council Members to make this a food policy and educational priority. We thank the Council for including free-universal school lunch for standalone middle school students in the FY 16 budget for the 2015-16 school year. The campaign will continue to work towards understanding successful implementation in middle school settings and ultimately making school meals healthy and universally free for all NYC public school students. We thank the City Council for its continued support.

**City Harvest** is eager to work with the Council and Administration to ensure adequate support and attention to hunger and food insecurity in the city.

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

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**Testimony of Lisa Levy, Director of Policy, Advocacy & Organizing  
New York City Coalition Against Hunger**

**Hearing Before The New York City Council General Welfare Committee  
Oversight: Hunger in New York City**

**January 13, 2016**

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

**Hunger in New York City**

Food insecurity and hunger remain high throughout New York City, with one in six city residents, which includes approximately one in five children and one in eight seniors living in homes who couldn't afford enough food in the 2012-2014 time period.

In addition, more than 1.7 million New Yorkers, or one in five, lived below the federal poverty line (\$19,790 for a family a three) in 2014, compared to 1.6 million in 2010 – an increase of 100,000 New Yorkers. It is important to note that the official federal poverty measure does not take into account most living costs, so, in high-cost cities like New York, it underestimates the number of people living in impoverished conditions.

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 2012-2014, in New York City alone, more than 450,000 residents lived in food insecure households that included at least one working person. In New York City alone, forty-eight percent of all adults between 15 and 65 who were food insecure were employed.

Statewide in New York, about one in seven residents suffered food insecurity in 2012-2014, representing a 56 percent jump from the 2006-2008 time period.

Unfortunately, these increases were compounded by cuts to federal programs designed to assist those most in need as well as decreases in participation in some of those very same programs. Between December, 2012, and September, 2015, participation in New York City in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP (the legal name for the old Food Stamp Program), dropped from 1,898,028 to 1,696,174 – a 201,854-person (11 percent) reduction. At the same time, President Barack Obama and Congress cut the average size of SNAP benefits. While Governor Andrew Cuomo was able to take executive action to ameliorate some of that federal cut, much of the reduction was beyond the power of the State or the City, and the average SNAP benefit in New York City declined from \$162 per person per month in December, 2012, to about \$148 per person per month in September, 2015.

Correspondingly, according to findings from our most recent Annual Hunger Survey, the New York City Coalition Against Hunger found that 80 percent of New York City’s food pantries and soup kitchens would increase the amount of food they distributed if they received more food. Yet nearly 33 percent of these agencies suffered from cuts in combined government and private resources.

**Over One in Five New York City Children – Nearly Half a Million – Are Food Insecure**

In 2012-2014, an estimated 403,780 children in New York City lived in food insecure households that did not have an adequate food supply throughout the year. This number represents 22 percent, or over one in five of the city’s youth population. It also represents a nine percent increase from 2006 - 2008, when 369,415 of New York City children lived in food insecure homes.

Brooklyn had the highest number of children in food insecure households, but the Bronx had the highest percentage.

<b>Borough*</b>	<b>Number of Food Insecure Children (2011-2013)</b>
Bronx	120,251
Brooklyn	196,033
Manhattan	57,263
Queens	55,368

<b>Borough*</b>	<b>Percent of Children in Food Insecure Homes (2011-2013)</b>
Bronx	37.17%
Brooklyn	25.54%
Manhattan	24.02%
Queens	11.98%

\*In general, due to sampling issues, the data for percent of people is more accurate than the data for the total number of people food insecure. Note that, given smaller sub-samples for these boroughs and sub-populations, margins of error are higher. Citywide numbers and percentages for child food insecurity include Staten Island, but there is not enough federal food insecurity data for that borough to adequately calculate a borough- specific child food insecurity rate for Staten Island. In 2013, according to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 18.7 percent of Staten Island children lived in poverty; the food insecurity rate is likely similar.

**Over One in Eight New York Seniors (Over The Age of 60) Are Food Insecure**

In 2012-2014, there were an estimated 164,695 food insecure seniors over the age of 60. This number represents 13.98 percent, or about one in eight of the city’s senior population. It also represents a 25 percent increase from 2006-2008, when 132,133 New York City seniors lived in food insecure homes.

Brooklyn had both the highest number and the greatest percentage of food insecure seniors.

<b>Borough*</b>	<b>Number of Food Insecure Seniors (2012- 2014)</b>
Bronx	32,854
Brooklyn	64,946
Manhattan	29,641
Queens	25,387

<b>Borough*</b>	<b>Percent of Food Insecure Seniors (2012-2014)</b>
Bronx	20.45%
Brooklyn	22.67%
Manhattan	11.54%
Queens	8.47%

\*In general, due to sampling issues, the data for percentage of people is more accurate than the data for the total number of people food who are food insecure. Note that, given smaller sub-samples for these boroughs and sub-populations, margins of error are higher. Citywide numbers and percentages for food insecurity include Staten Island, but there is not enough federal food insecurity data for that borough to adequately calculate food security rates. According to U.S. Census data, Staten Island had a senior poverty rate of 9.1 percent for the years of 2011-2013; the food insecurity rate is likely similar.

**Adding Insult to Injury- Cuts to the Safety Net**

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

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

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

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

In 2013, and 2014, the SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps) program was deeply cut by nearly \$14 billion, forcing the 47 million Americans – and 1.8 million New Yorkers – who depend on SNAP to rely more heavily on charities and emergency feeding programs to feed their families. The average family of three lost \$29 per month, more than 20 meals monthly. The city's economy is losing more than \$200 million in federal aid each year.

*On top of all that*, Congress passed a Farm Bills further slashing SNAP by *another* \$8.6 billion. Insane. Immoral.

Even before the most recent SNAP cuts kicked in, our annual hunger survey provided hard data to prove what we see every day – still soaring hunger. 92.7 percent of New York City's food pantries and soup kitchens reported that they were being impacted by the SNAP cuts. 43.8 percent of agencies reported that the SNAP cuts *significantly* increased the number of clients and/or significantly increased the food needs of existing clients, and 48.9 percent reported that the SNAP cuts have *somewhat* increased the number of clients and/or significantly increased the food needs of existing clients. Overall, 82 percent of agencies reported an increased demand in people needing food, with 43 percent reporting that demand has greatly increased.

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

Low-income New Yorkers faced one of the toughest winters ever this year, and it's just not because of the weather. Far too many New Yorkers will have to make the difficult decision between buying groceries or covering basic living expenses.

The data proved that the number of poor and hungry New Yorkers has not decreased since the start of the recession. One in six city residents – and nearly one in five children – still struggle against hunger. But there are actions that New York City can do to help those in need.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo was able to take administrative action to prevent the heat and eat cuts from being implemented in New York, thereby saving \$457 million for the each of the two years in SNAP benefits that would otherwise be cut. He has indicated that funding would be provided to prevent those cuts from harming New Yorkers in 2016. The actions prevented cuts averaging \$127 per month for 300,000 affected households statewide.

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

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

When funds from SNAP are decreased, people of low income often turn to emergency food providers to fill in the gap. The New York City Coalition Against Hunger estimates that all the food pantries, soup kitchens, food banks, and food rescue groups in the U.S provide, at most, \$5 billion worth of food each year. It doesn't take a math genius to know that \$5 billion from charity is less than the \$8.6 billion lost in SNAP cuts. Unfortunately, this is a gap that just is not being filled, and so it's the people in need who are doing without.

## Changes and Solutions

We must ensure an adequate nutrition assistance safety net and boost upward mobility through expanded access to SNAP, school breakfast, school lunch, WIC, and summer meals benefits that makes robust benefits available, free of stigma and hassle, for those in need.

The Human Resources Administration is now treating low-income New Yorkers, and the advocates who represent them, as trusted partners, not as feared adversaries, for which we commend them.

Unfortunately, while there were 1.69 million recipients of SNAP in New York City in November, 2015, according to HRA, there were approximately 600,000 eligible New Yorkers not receiving SNAP. Again, we commend HRA, and specifically Commissioner Steven Banks and his staff for introducing a variety of programs to increase outreach and retention of benefits. Requesting waivers from the State to eliminate application and recertification barriers, streamlining methods of communication for claimants for phone interviews, and eliminating redundancies on both application and retention sides not only assists claimants but saves the city and state time and money.

In the spring, Mayor de Blasio announced the introduction of breakfast after the bell for all stand-alone elementary schools, which serve about 339,000 students. The new policy is a great opportunity to increase the number of students who start the day with a nutritious breakfast, either served in the classroom or via “grab and go.” With 1 in 5 kids going hungry in New York City and only about 35% of students participating in the cafeteria-style breakfast, introducing this proven program can decrease hunger for the youngest members of our society. By expanding breakfast in the classroom or the “grab and go” model in hallways and universal lunch, the Department of Education can improve nutrition, improve educational outcomes, decrease childhood obesity and receive more revenue from the federal government.

Last October, we visited PS 18 in the South Bronx, where 93 percent of the school’s students are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch. One of the first schools to roll out in-classroom breakfast, PS 18 is already an example of this program’s success. Before breakfast in the classroom began, only about 200 out of 600 students ate in the cafeteria before school. But since PS 18 started to serve in-classroom breakfast as part of the school day, 500 students now start each morning with a healthy meal. At this rate, the school will likely serve over 50,000 more breakfast meals per year than before.

Next up, expanding this effective program to middle and high school students. Additionally, expanding the service of universal lunch, which was introduced by the City Council in 2014, to all stand-alone

middle schools, should be on the agenda. Last summer, the Department of Education served over 8.1 million free summer meals, more than ever before. However, of the children who depend on free or reduced-price lunch during the school year, only a fraction are participating in the summer meals program. The City can redouble its efforts to spread the word about this important program and expand the number of locations where the meals are served in order to ensure that children do not go hungry when school is out.

The New York City Coalition Against Hunger recognizes that change does not happen overnight, especially with city bureaucracies the size of the Department of Education, and HRA, but with the number of people who need assistance, we are keenly aware that with each day that passes, people in need are waiting for benefits that could make the difference between feeding their family or going hungry.

### **Conclusion**

Over the last year New York City has made progress in the fight against hunger because we have made a concerted effort to do so. The New York City Coalition Against Hunger acknowledges that effort, as it is society's duty to care for its most vulnerable. Through continued effort New York City can continue to be more effective at assisting those in need.



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**New York City Council Oversight Hearing:  
Hunger in New York City  
January 13, 2015  
Council Chambers, City Hall, NY**

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

My name is Rena Resnick and I am 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. Met Council provides immediate assistance to New Yorkers in crisis and creates pathways to self sufficiency through the following programs: America's largest kosher food pantry system, emergency social services, family violence services, home repairs, homecare services, benefits enrollment and outreach, and affordable housing. Our grassroots Jewish Community Council network provides support to families in their neighborhoods—right where they live.

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

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

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

As many people in this room know, there are 1.4 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 each month, an average family that keeps kosher runs out by the second week.

Allow me to share with you a story of one of these food insecure New Yorkers. For many years, David owned a kosher butcher shop in Boro Park. Every Friday, David would put aside some of the meat to provide free of charge to poor families in his neighborhood so that they could celebrate the Sabbath with dignity. As a senior, Sam no longer works at the store. Without his income that he earned at the store, he struggled every month to pay his rent and utilities. To save money, David stopped purchasing kosher

protein until he walked into the Boro Park JCC and a caseworker enrolled him into SNAP. Now, with the assistance of SNAP David is able to add kosher protein in his diet to ensure that he is able have a nutritious diet.

David is one of the tens of thousands of poor and near-poor New Yorkers whom we serve through our food programs, which are designed to aid, sustain and empower hungry New Yorkers. They include the country's largest kosher food pantry system, emergency food cards, home delivered meals, food rescue and SNAP enrollment assistance.

Last year we provided:

- Pantry items for 2.46 million meals to over 15,000 families each month at 30 sites
- 11,195 families enrolled into SNAP, leveraging more than \$3 million in government funds
- \$514,650 in emergency food cards

We understand the unique challenges of affording kosher food and the importance of food for rituals. That is why all of the food throughout our system is kosher. That said, our services are available to anyone who is hungry—regardless as to whether or not they keep kosher.

In order to help more New Yorkers in their fight against hunger, we have expanded our SNAP outreach efforts to focus on Holocaust survivors and seniors. Many seniors work their entire lives, but do not have a deep safety net and are unaware that they are qualified for SNAP.

Through the City Council Holocaust Survivor Initiative funds, Met Council created the “Fourth Week Initiative for Holocaust Survivors,” which will buy and deliver groceries for survivors, who are SNAP recipients, during the fourth week of each month. Our new Coordinator of Emergency Food Programs will ensure that clients receive supplemental groceries delivered to their homes and each month and will check in on the clients to evaluate for additional services and provide case management. With our partners at the local Jewish Community Councils we expect to continue to expand the service.

Additionally, through private funding from the National Council on Aging (NCOA), Met Council hired a Benefits Coordinator dedicated to educating and enrolling seniors. To ensure that barriers are reduced for seniors, we provide home visits for enrollment assistance as well as assistance with other food resources.

We applaud the Administration's and HRA's redesign and increased accessibility of ACCESS NYC. To best serve the hungry and needy in New York City, we recommend that HRA enhance ACCESSNYC options for CBO partners, allowing for integrated document submission at the time of the application submission through the use of computer and mobile upload. We also applaud HRA's plans to provide a client account portal, where clients can view the status of their benefits, their benefit allotment and other important information online.

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

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



Testimony: Hunger in New York City

The Committee on General Welfare  
January 13, 2016

Good afternoon, my name is Althea Craig-Morell and I am a member of the Safety Net Activists, a group supported by 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 reduced my SNAP benefits to \$15 based on a miscalculation. I requested several fair hearings and won all of them, but my case was not corrected. It was finally corrected last month, in December 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 and balance my finances between my medical expenses to meet my medical needs and not having food. A lot of New Yorkers are in this 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:

**1. Greater resources for administration of the SNAP program.**

Unfortunately, many New Yorkers have had similar experiences to mine with the SNAP program in the past several years. Over the past 5 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, fair hearing compliance, and phone interviews. While we commend Commissioner Banks and HRA's efforts to make improvements, we recommend increased resources and oversight for the SNAP program.

**2. Expand the Health Bucks program.**

The Health Bucks program is run by New York City Department of Health and allows SNAP recipients to receive \$2 for every \$5 spent at a farmer's market. This program is good for everyone - it expands access to healthy food for New Yorkers and supports local farmers.

We encourage the Council to work with the Department of Health to expand the Health Bucks program by matching SNAP purchases **dollar for dollar**. The program should also be spread to produce bought at NYC Green Carts and grocery stores. Both of these things are already done in states such as Michigan with great success.

**3. Work with the State to expand SNAP to more immigrants.**

Immigrant families are more likely to suffer from inadequate income and food insecurity than other households. Part of the problem is that many immigrants in New York City are not eligible for SNAP under current rules. The Council should work with the State to expand food stamps to



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these immigrants, as is currently done in Maine, Connecticut, California, Minnesota, and Washington.

Thank you for your attention.

Please feel free to contact the following individuals with any questions or follow up:

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Testimony prepared by

**Rachel Sabella**

for the

**Committee on General Welfare**

on

**Hunger in New York City**

**January 13, 2016**

on behalf of

**Food Bank For New York City**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Good afternoon Chairman Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. My name is Rachel Sabella and I am the Director of Government Relations at Food Bank For New York City. Food Bank appreciates the opportunity to present testimony today to the City Council for the committee's oversight hearing on Hunger in New York City.

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

For more than 30 years, Food Bank For New York City has been the city's major hunger-relief organization, working to end food poverty throughout the five boroughs. Nearly one in five New York City residents relies on our programs and services. Through our network of more than 1,000 charities and schools citywide, Food Bank's food distribution program provides approximately 64 million free meals for New Yorkers in need. Food Bank For New York City's income support services, including SNAP enrollment and free tax assistance for the working poor, put more than \$150 million each year into the pockets of New Yorkers, helping them to afford food and achieve greater dignity and independence. In addition, Food Bank's nutrition education programs and services empower more than 42,000 children, teens and adults to sustain a healthy diet on a low budget. Working toward long-term solutions to food poverty, Food Bank develops policy and conducts research to inform community and government efforts.

My testimony today will focus on hunger in New York City and strategic funding and policy recommendations to work towards ending hunger.

### **NEW YORK CITY'S MEAL GAP: 241 MILLION**

SNAP is our nation's first line of defense against hunger. A federal entitlement program, SNAP now provides food assistance to 45.4 million Americans.<sup>1</sup> SNAP is effective and efficient, and it is countercyclical, meaning has the flexibility to grow to meet rising economic need.

**Nearly 1.7 million New York City residents (almost one in five) currently rely on SNAP** to keep food on the table,<sup>2</sup> with a monthly household benefit that has been averaging approximately \$260 since November of 2013's SNAP cut – a reduction of approximately \$18 per month, or \$200 per year.<sup>3</sup>

Since the cuts, Food Bank For New York City analysis finds that New York City residents have lost more than 116 million meals, or 5.3 million meals per month, as a result.<sup>4</sup>

Despite SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs (like school meals, and the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children, or WIC), **nearly 1.4 million New Yorkers rely on emergency food<sup>5</sup> – evidence that a meal gap remains.** The meal gap is the most sophisticated food insecurity metric available, representing the translation into meals of the financial resources needed by food-insecure households to secure an adequate diet year-round.<sup>6</sup>

**New York City's meal gap (as of 2013, the most recent year for which data is available) is 241 million meals.**<sup>7</sup> In terms of a borough breakdown, the meal gap for:

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<sup>1</sup> United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Food Bank For New York City analysis of SNAP participation and benefit data reported by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) and the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) as of November 2015.

<sup>3</sup> *Hunger Cliff NY: Bridging a City's Monthly 5.3 Million Meal Loss.* Food Bank for New York City. November 2015.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Hunger's New Normal: Redefining Emergency in Post-Recession New York City.* Food Bank For New York City. October 2013.

<sup>6</sup> When the City Council legislated that the Administration report food insecurity annually as part of its food metrics report, the Meal Gap was adopted by the City of New York as its official food insecurity metric

<sup>7</sup> Gundersen, C., E. Engelhard, A. Satoh, & E. Waxman. *Map the Meal Gap 2015: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity at the County Level.* Feeding America, 2015.

- the Bronx is 46.5 million;
- Brooklyn is 89 million;
- Manhattan is 43.6 million;
- Queens is 53.1 million; and
- Staten Island is 8.8 million.

As an attachment to my testimony, you will find a visual representation of the Meal Gap by City Council district. I look forward to meeting with individual Council Members to discuss the meal gap in your district and ways we can work together to ultimately eliminate it.

## OUR EMERGENCY FOOD SYSTEM

When cash, benefits and the generosity of family and friends have been exhausted, the emergency food network is the resource of last resort for those struggling to keep food on the table. Yet the emergency food supply, our last line of defense against hunger, is not sufficient to meet the need.

As referenced earlier, in November of 2013, sweeping cuts were made to the federal SNAP program. Two years after the cuts, nine out of ten (90 percent) food pantries and soup kitchens continue to see increased visitor traffic, while continuing to experience food shortages.<sup>8</sup> In September 2015:

- **Approximately half (49 percent) of food pantries and soup kitchens reported running out of food**, or particular types of food needed for complete pantry bags or meals;
- **More than one third (36 percent) of food pantries and soup kitchens reported having to turn people away** due to food shortages; and
- **Almost half (45 percent) of food pantries reported reducing the number of meals provided in their pantry bags.**<sup>9</sup>

These statistics speak to a profound insufficiency of food in the emergency food supply, and the acute operational stress under which food pantries and soup kitchens have been functioning since the cuts. The November 2013 SNAP cuts continue to represent the biggest systemic factor reducing the food purchasing power of low-income people.<sup>10</sup>

It is critical to know who relies on emergency food programs –

- An estimated 1.4 million New York City **residents** rely on emergency food programs, including soup kitchens and food pantries, each year.
- Approximately 339,000 New York City **children** or approximately one out of every five, rely on soup kitchens and food pantries.
- Approximately 604,770 New York City adult **women**, or approximately one out of every six, rely on soup kitchens and food pantries.
- Approximately 204,000 New York City **seniors**, or approximately one out of every five, rely on soup kitchens and food pantries.

<sup>8</sup> *Hunger Cliff NY: Bridging a City's Monthly 5.3 Million Meal Loss*. Food Bank for New York City. November 2015.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> For example, local unemployment, a highly influential factor in seeking food assistance, has been in steady decline in New York city since then.

- Approximately 70,000 New York City **veterans**, or approximately three out of every ten, rely on soup kitchens and food pantries<sup>11</sup>.

## **POLICY PRIORITIES TO ENSURE NO NEW YORKER GOES HUNGRY**

No New Yorker should go hungry: access to adequate, nutritious food is a fundamental human right. If New York City is serious about lifting the floor for all New Yorkers, let us set the threshold there. Thankfully, the policies and programs to realize this core principle are already in existence, and with the collective commitment of leaders across sectors, we can make this happen. While cuts to SNAP have intensified the challenge, policy and budget options well within the authority and discretion of City government can considerably improve the lives of New Yorkers who struggle to afford food.

New York City's anti-hunger resources – primarily those that bolster SNAP enrollment and fortify our emergency food system – are more vital than ever. Food Bank For New York City offers these recommendations on behalf of the emergency food network in a spirit of partnership. It is our hope this spirit will be met by constructive engagement by the City Council and the Administration as we take on hunger together. (Attached to the testimony you will find a complete copy of Food Bank For New York City's 2016 Policy Priorities.)

### ***Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP)***

New York City's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) is a major source of food for our city's emergency food network. EFAP plays an especially important role because it provides a steady year-round supply of nutritious food for the approximately 500 food pantries and soup kitchens that participate. EFAP provides food from all five food groups, and all EFAP food meets the City's rigorous nutrition standards. In addition, EFAP is an important source of kosher food. Increasing funding to \$15.3 million, which would take into account rising poverty and food costs since the start of the Great Recession, would allow pantries to adjust for the current inadequacy of the food supply, which only allows food pantries to provide 5.8 meals in a typical pantry bag – far short of New York State's nine-meal standard.<sup>12</sup>

Up until two years ago, the City Council supplemented EFAP with an initiative that has now been baselined. While we appreciate that baselined funds can create more stability and predictability in funding, baselining has put an end to a major improvement to the program – giving participating emergency food providers (EFPs) the ability to choose and order the food they need through Food Bank's wholesale purchasing program. This allowed EFPs to choose based on the preferences of community members and the availability of food from other sources, such as the federal Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), donations and other supply streams – all while maintaining the City's abiding commitment to providing food of high nutritional quality. Under EFAP's current program model, food is ordered by HRA (through the City's Department of Citywide Administrative Services) to cover a six-month period for EFAP providers. While HRA has worked hard within this structure to make the program as flexible and responsive to EFPs' needs as possible, the food provided by EFAP is exclusively shelf-stable (i.e., it does not include such items as frozen meat options, fresh dairy or fresh produce) and cannot respond to fluctuations in the availability of specific types of food in communities in real time.

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<sup>11</sup> *Hunger's New Normal: Redefining Emergency in Post-Recession New York City*. Food Bank For New York City. October 2013.

<sup>12</sup> By economists' definition, the Great Recession began in December 2007.

We are pleased that our partners at HRA have heard this feedback and are exploring avenues to take the lessons learned from the previous City Council initiative and make lasting improvements in the program through choice. We look forward to continue working with HRA to ensure the program is best serving the needs of the emergency food network.

### **SNAP**

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

SNAP is our first line of defense against hunger, and we are heartened by the energy and resources that HRA has put into improving access to SNAP for all eligible New Yorkers. We have enthusiastically partnered in promoting HRA's #SNAPHelps campaign to spread the word about the availability of SNAP, and are encouraged by HRA's work, in partnership with the New York State Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance, to apply for federal waivers and options that increase benefit amounts and reduce the burden on applicants and HRA staff. We applaud HRA for working with the state and the US Department of Agriculture specifically to request the broadest possible waiver on the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) provision. (According to the most recent Farm Bill, individuals that meet the ABAWD criteria, who experience more than three jobless months in any three-year period, will have a complete loss of SNAP benefits if they are not participating in an approved employment and training program, regardless of whether a program is available.)

We are pleased that HRA is working to lower barriers to benefits, and taking advantage of technology in new ways to expand access to SNAP. We encourage them to simplify and fully implement online SNAP application and recertification processes.

We also encourage HRA to coordinate SNAP outreach and application with other benefits and services that reach low-income populations, like emergency food programs and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites.

We look forward to working with HRA on continuing to improve SNAP access for seniors, students, working parents and others.

### **SCHOOL MEALS**

Maximizing participation in school meals will not only provide hundreds of thousands of New York City children with access to a nutritious breakfast and lunch, it will also help close New York City's meal gap. Food Bank For New York City applauds the City Council for continuing to prioritize school meals each year – expansion would not have occurred without your support and leadership.

The 2015-2016 school year saw New York City implement free lunch for all public school students in stand-alone middle schools. Participation among middle school students increased as students had equal access to school lunches – the stigma was reduced. Food Bank For New York City is a proud member of the Lunch 4 Learning campaign and looks forward to continuing to work with the City Council to ensure that this year's budget includes an expansion of Universal School Meals (USM) beyond middle school students – to *all* New York City students.

New York City's public schools have offered universal, free school breakfast since 2004. The breakfast period is scheduled 30 minutes before the start of the school day. Unfortunately, the inconvenience of the program and the stigma associated with participation – the only children in the cafeteria before the start of the school day are those whose parents could not provide them a breakfast at home – conspire to keep participation low.

Breakfast after the Bell allows schools to adopt practices that reduce stigma and increase participation. We were pleased that the FY16 New York City budget included the gradual implementation of Breakfast in the Classroom in stand-alone elementary schools. We look forward to receiving more details on program implementation from the Department of Education (DOE). We also encourage the Council to work with the Department of Education to make BIC an opt-out, rather than an opt-in, program for middle and high schools.

We also recognize that some schools may need facilities/capital improvements in order to accommodate program necessities and anticipated growth in participation associated with USM and BIC. We urge the City Council to work with the Administration to fund these necessary capital improvements.

### ***INCOME SUPPORT & POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAMS***

Approximately one in five adults on food pantry and soup kitchen lines is employed - that's almost 200,000 New Yorkers who are working but not earning enough to provide for themselves and their families. Recognizing that there is no surer way off a food pantry or soup kitchen line than a living wage job, there is much our city can do to support working New Yorkers who are earning too little to afford needed food.

We urge the City Council to work closely with the Department of Consumer Affairs to expand free tax preparation services available to low-income New Yorkers throughout our city. Approximately 20 percent of tax filers eligible for the EITC in New York fail to claim it, and the high-quality free tax assistance services available throughout our city can ensure low-income New Yorkers receive every refund and credit to which they are entitled. In 2015, Food Bank For New York's free tax program, prepared approximately 85,000 returns for low-income New Yorkers, for a total of \$141 million in tax credits and returns.

We applaud New York for raising the minimum wage so that full-time workers can be assured of their ability to afford food. While this increase may feel like a difficult decision to small businesses and charities, it is a good decision as low wages are a major cause of food insecurity.

We encourage New York City to develop job creation, training and education strategies that are geared toward poverty reduction and to invest in economic development that both enhances the nutrition landscape and provides opportunities for employment in low-income communities.

## **WHAT FOOD BANK FOR NEW YORK CITY IS DOING IN THE BATTLE AGAINST HUNGER**

### ***Emergency Food Network***

Food Bank For New York City procures, stores and distributes more than 70 million pounds of healthy food every year, including fresh produce. The core of our food storage and distribution

operation is our 90,000-square-foot warehouse in the Bronx. A full-service delivery operation, Food Bank dispatches tractor-trailers from the warehouse five days a week to our citywide network of approximately 1,000 schools and member agencies, including food pantries, soup kitchens, senior centers, after-school programs, daycare centers and more.

### ***Nutrition and Health Education***

Food Bank's nutrition education program in New York City public schools reaches more than 40,000 children, teens and adults. The curriculum for students ages 5 to 12 includes interactive cooking activities to foster children's enjoyment of healthy foods, and fun exercises to promote an active lifestyle. Teenagers take what they learn one step further, serving as good health ambassadors at their high schools by conducting nutrition education workshops for their peers. Through free workshops held at our network of food pantries and soup kitchens, we encourage thousands more people to make wiser nutrition choices with limited food dollars.

### ***Campus Pantry***

Food Bank For New York City's dual-track Campus Pantry program helps bridge the meal gap experienced by both ends of the student spectrum, enabling children and young adults to access emergency food that can be used to make balanced, nutritious meals at home. Hunger doesn't discriminate; it affects students of all ages — from kindergarteners to college students.

Children from low-income families get two meals a day at school then go home hungry, never sure if there will be enough to eat for dinner or over the weekend. And many college students—an underserved segment of New Yorkers in need — often find themselves cash-strapped and struggling to afford food. Now both have a place to turn.

Campus pantries are often found in community schools throughout New York City. In addition, we are so pleased to have recently begun a new partnership with CUNY to launch up to 10 campus pantries in their network of schools over the next two years.

### ***Benefits Access***

Access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, is an essential issue for low-income New Yorkers who struggle to afford food. Food Bank For New York City's Food Stamp Direct Service & Outreach program works to educate and connect directly with low-income New Yorkers to ensure access to this key piece of the hunger safety net.

### ***Financial Services***

Food Bank's Tax Assistance & Financial Services Program provides hard-working, low-income New Yorkers with free tax preparation services, helping them get the refunds and credits to which they are entitled, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)—a key piece of the public safety net, which alone can be worth up to \$8,293 for families. Yet, almost 250,000 New Yorkers who are eligible for EITC don't apply for it.

One of the largest programs of its type in the country, Food Bank's Tax Assistance & Financial Services Program completed more than 85,000 tax returns for low-income New Yorkers in 2015— helping to bring more than \$141 million in tax refunds and credits back to struggling

New Yorkers as well as our local economy. Every year nearly 300 certified volunteer tax preparers donate their time through our tax program. Since the program's inception in 2002, Food Bank's free tax services have secured more than \$900 million in tax refunds for our clients. Food Bank also provides virtual tax filing, which enables people in lesser-served areas to have their returns prepared and filed remotely.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Over the last year, the Administration and the City Council have expressed a deep commitment to helping New Yorkers in need. This is our City's moment to come together as a united front to show its commitment to the principle that no New Yorker should lack access to an affordable, nutritious diet. Let us set a goal of closing New York City's widening meal gap and becoming the first city in the country to end food poverty. Food Bank For New York City looks forward to working with together with the City Council and the Administration to develop a plan to ensure no New Yorker goes to bed hungry. Together we can do this.

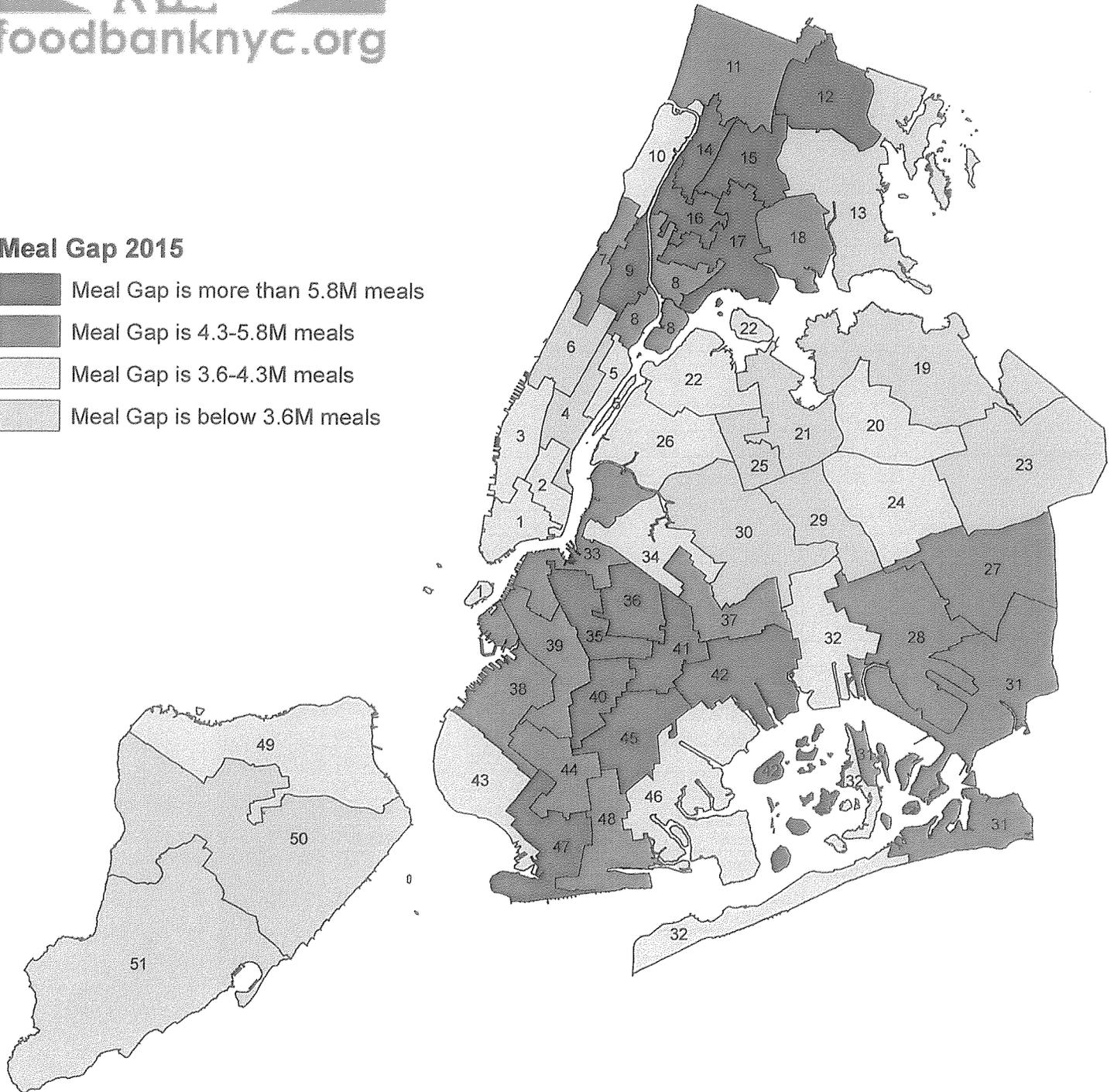
Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.



## Meal Gap by City Council District

### Meal Gap 2015

- Meal Gap is more than 5.8M meals
- Meal Gap is 4.3-5.8M meals
- Meal Gap is 3.6-4.3M meals
- Meal Gap is below 3.6M meals



*The Meal Gap, New York City's official measure of food insecurity, represents the meals missing from the homes of families and individuals struggling with food insecurity - that is, when household food budgets fall too short to secure adequate, nutritious food year-round.*

*Food Bank For New York City analysis based on Gundersen, C., A. Satoh, A. Dewey, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. Map the Meal Gap 2015: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level. Feeding America, 2015.*

Council District	Borough	Member	Food Insecurity Rate	2015 Meal Gap	Rank
1	Manhattan	Chin	16%	4,133,706	32
2	Manhattan	Mendez	14%	3,736,234	37
3	Manhattan	Johnson	15%	3,842,227	36
4	Manhattan	Garodnick	11%	3,020,785	46
5	Manhattan	Kallos	15%	3,868,725	35
6	Manhattan	Rosenthal	12%	3,073,781	45
7	Manhattan	Levine	19%	4,981,645	19
8	Manhattan/Bronx	Mark-Viverito	22%	5,776,589	14
9	Manhattan	Dickens	26%	6,969,004	5
10	Manhattan	Rodriguez	16%	4,160,204	29
11	Bronx	Cohen	18%	5,024,465	18
12	Bronx	King	23%	6,480,418	10
13	Bronx	Vacca	12%	3,283,031	43
14	Bronx	Cabrera	23%	6,566,062	9
15	Bronx	Torres	22%	6,252,033	11
16	Bronx	Gibson	24%	6,794,447	7
17	Bronx	Arroyo	23%	6,623,158	8
18	Bronx	Palma	19%	5,452,686	17
19	Queens	Vallone	10%	2,757,417	48
20	Queens	Koo	16%	4,136,125	31
21	Queens	Ferreras- Copeland	10%	2,757,417	48
22	Queens	Constantinides	16%	4,162,639	28
23	Queens	Vacant	10%	2,598,335	50
24	Queens	Lancman	15%	4,083,098	33
25	Queens	Dromm	12%	3,287,689	41
26	Queens	Van Bramer	14%	3,685,394	39
27	Queens	Miller	22%	5,700,429	15
28	Queens	Wills	17%	4,586,857	22
29	Queens	Koslowitz	12%	3,287,689	41
30	Queens	Crowley	12%	3,155,121	44
31	Queens	Richards	21%	5,567,861	16
32	Queens	Ulrich	13%	3,367,230	40
33	Brooklyn	Levine	18%	4,768,465	20
34	Brooklyn/Queens	Reynoso	16%	4,155,757	30
35	Brooklyn	Cumbo	26%	6,872,982	6
36	Brooklyn	Cornegy	30%	7,911,922	1
37	Brooklyn	Espinal	17%	4,448,791	24
38	Brooklyn	Menchaca	17%	4,475,430	23
39	Brooklyn	Lander	16%	4,368,873	26
40	Brooklyn	Eugene	28%	7,405,772	3
41	Brooklyn	Mealy	29%	7,672,166	2
42	Brooklyn	Barron	28%	7,352,493	4
43	Brooklyn	Gentile	15%	4,049,199	34
44	Brooklyn	Greenfield	18%	4,741,825	21
45	Brooklyn	Williams	22%	5,807,404	13
46	Brooklyn	Maisel	16%	4,262,315	27
47	Brooklyn	Treyger	23%	6,153,717	12
48	Brooklyn	Deutsch	17%	4,448,791	24
49	Staten Island	Rose	13%	3,714,996	38
50	Staten Island	Matteo	10%	2,898,823	47
51	Staten Island	Vacant	8%	2,167,081	51

# FOOD BANK FOR NEW YORK CITY POLICY PRIORITIES 2016

## New York City

### Leverage and Fortify the Emergency Food System

- Increase NYC's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) baseline funding to a Fiscal Year 2017 funding level of \$15.3 million to account for increased need.
- Continue improvements to food quality by giving programs choice over food selection and by offering more minimally processed, fresh and frozen food.
- Enact a policy of cost-neutral preferencing of kosher and halal products.

### Strengthen, Streamline and Simplify SNAP

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

### Expand Access to School and Summer Meals

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

### Tackle Poverty to End Hunger

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

## New York State

### Leverage and Fortify the Emergency Food System

- Maintain dedicated, line-item funding for the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) in the State budget, and increase baseline funding to a Fiscal Year 2017 funding level of \$51 million to adjust for rising food costs and increased need.
- Increase funding for administrative and operational support.

### Strengthen, Streamline and Simplify SNAP

- Allot annual Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) funding to "Heat & Eat" households to maintain SNAP benefits at higher levels.
- Maximize all federal waivers that lower barriers to participation and simplify program administration.
- Restore eligibility for all documented immigrants.
- Develop a comprehensive state SNAP outreach plan that leverages all available funding sources for federal matching dollars.
- Coordinate among multiple benefits so that New Yorkers can apply for several programs and services simultaneously.
- Leverage the health insurance exchange platform to enable screening for SNAP and other programs.
- Expand educational programs and job readiness opportunities covered under SNAP Education and Training.

### Expand Access to School and Summer Meals

- Provide funding to help offset any startup costs associated with schools undertaking or expanding USM and/or BIC.

# FOOD BANK FOR NEW YORK CITY POLICY PRIORITIES 2016

- Provide incentives for schools to increase the number of nutritious meals prepared on-site.
- Ensure that the Education Department publicizes SFSP before the end of the school year.
- Encourage participation in SFSP by New York State park sites.

## Protect and Strengthen WIC

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

## Expand Access to Nutritious Food

- Enact the Farm to Food Bank bill (Assembly Bill 8075/Senate Bill 5431-A) to increase donations of fresh local produce, dairy and other farm products.
- Increase farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects in low-income communities.
- Adopt transportation policies that would facilitate access to local food and make nutritious local food more affordable.

## Tackle Poverty to End Hunger

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

## Federal

### Leverage and Fortify the Emergency Food System

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

### Strengthen, Streamline and Simplify SNAP

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

### Expand Access to School and Summer Meals

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

### Protect and Strengthen WIC

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

### Tackle Poverty to End Hunger

- Enhance the federal EITC.
- Expand funding of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.
- Reject proposals to increase filing requirements for VITA preparers and self-preparers claiming an EITC and/or Child Tax Credit.
- Raise the federal minimum wage, and index it to inflation.
- Adopt policies that support a living wage with access to medical benefits and paid time off, and that make living wage jobs more accessible to low-income people.
- Develop job creation, training and education strategies that are geared toward poverty reduction.



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Testimony Submitted by  
**Loren Miller, Associate Vice President, Policy and Capacity Building**  
on behalf of United Way of New York City

Before The New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

*Oversight – Hunger in NYC*

January 13, 2016

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Good Morning. My name is Loren Miller and I serve as Associate Vice President at United Way of New York City. Thank you to Chairperson Levin and the members of the City Council Committee on General Welfare for holding today's hearing on hunger in New York City. We appreciate the Council's continued commitment to holding this annual hunger oversight hearing but we are deeply saddened that issues of hunger and food insecurity continue to have a high level of urgency for so many of our neighbors.

Hunger is a symptom of poverty. As one of the richest Cities in the world, it is incumbent upon us to strengthen the services and supports 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 nonprofit sector and philanthropy. It also requires us to collaborate and align our efforts along a clear road map.

**United Way of New York City Background**

For almost 80 years, United Way of New York City has worked to support vulnerable New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs. We partner across the business, government, non-profit and philanthropic sectors to invest in community level solutions, programs that are coordinated and aligned towards a common goal in the areas of education, income security, hunger prevention and nutrition assistance. And while our mandate is to stem the root causes of poverty and create systems-level change so that all individuals and families can access quality education and the opportunity to lead healthy and financially secure lives, the majority of our program budget supports New Yorkers in crisis. According to the 2014 self-sufficiency standard - a nuanced measure of what it costs a given NYC household to meet their basic needs - 42% of New York City household do not have adequate income to afford their basic needs without assistance. What is more staggering, is that 83% of these households are working.

**UWNYC's Hunger Reduction Programs**

UWNYC has worked with a cross-section of partners around the city for more than 15 years to ensure that our Emergency Food System, and the soup kitchens, food pantries and community-based organizations that comprise it, have strong and effective operations, and make healthy and nutritious food not only accessible but a staple to the clients they serve. In 2014, we invested \$11million in more than 500 community-based organizations so that thousands of children, adults and families could access emergency food, emergency shelter,



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and income supports to meet their basic needs. In addition to our program funding and capacity building supports to food pantries, soup kitchens, the Emergency Food and Shelter programs, emergency rent, mortgage and utility payments, and SNAP, UWNYP is also a founding member of the Policy Committee on New York City Hunger Resources. Through this collaboration, we partner with colleagues who include City Harvest, Food Bank and HRA's EFAP, to coordinate resources and move towards a more efficient and targeted distribution of scarce food and capacity support funds.

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1. UWNYP's FeedNYC initiative strengthens 400+ food pantries and soup kitchens with healthy and nutritious food, operational capacity building supports, and funds for capital equipment.
2. Our Emergency Food and Shelter Program funds community based organizations to meet a range of costs associated with emergency lodging and services to homeless families and preserves housing, provide shelter, and support their basic energy needs.
3. Emergency rent, mortgage and utility payments provide emergency funds for thousands of families to prevent homelessness by covering a month's rent, mortgage or utilities.
4. Our SNAP funding enables caseworkers to outreach and screen thousands of New Yorkers every year. In 2015 we confirmed the enrollment of more than 4000 individuals in SNAP.

**Rates of Income Adequacy in NYC**

New Yorkers are not earning enough to meet the high cost of living. The most recent self-sufficiency standard analysis for our city determined that 2.7 million individuals - more than two in five households - lack enough income to meet their basic needs. Wages are insufficient to meet basic needs and the cost of food, housing and childcare continue to rise faster than wages. The gap between income and cost of living is as wide as it's been since 2000.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard is a nuanced measure of the income a household needs in order to afford basics without turning to public or private assistance. Unlike the federal poverty level, it accounts for the variability based on the number of people in the household, their ages, geographic location and a specific point in time. United Way of New York City (UWNYP), in partnership with the Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement, The New York Community Trust, and City Harvest, published the 2014 Self-Sufficiency Standard Report, *Overlooked and Undercounted: The Struggle to Make Ends Meet in New York City*—a study that establishes a new model for economic self-sufficiency.

The report shows that a single adult living in the Bronx - constituting the least expensive neighborhoods across the City's five boroughs - must earn at least \$12.76 hourly, or \$26,951 annually, to afford basic, minimal expenses. If that single adult lived in Queens, the hourly wage would need to go up to \$15.36 and the annual to \$32,432. If that adult in the Bronx were a parent, the hourly wage floor would go up to \$24.99, to pay for the child's expenses and to afford the high cost of childcare so that he or she could work.



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The Self-Sufficiency budget is bare bones. It is the most conservative estimate of the income needed to afford a household's minimal expenses. It includes costs for housing, childcare, food, health care, transportation, taxes, one time emergency savings and a small percentage of items that includes things like clothes, phone and cleaning supplies. It does not include the costs of paying off debt or saving for a child's college fund or retirement.

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The wage floor for many working families is inadequate for even the least costly household in New York City. This translates to more than two million workers who must turn to public or private assistance to make ends meet. When work does not currently serve as a path out of poverty, we have to rethink the way employment is structured.

**Progress**

We applaud the steps that NYC has taken at so many levels to reduce poverty and ensure that New Yorkers have access to healthy and affordable food. We are especially encouraged by the efforts from the city council, the Mayor's Office, HRA and DOE and want to highlight the following milestones:

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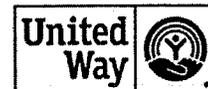
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- We applaud and endorse Mayor de Blasio's recent minimum wage raise for City workers to \$15 per hour by the end of 2018. This much anticipated wage increase is a critical step towards reducing food insecurity.
- This past year showed significant support for anti-hunger initiatives. This includes \$17.9 million to phase-in breakfast in the classroom programs for public elementary schools, continued support for Health Bucks and the additional \$1.8 million to fill substantial gaps in the Emergency Food Assistance Program.
- SNAP is an efficient, cost-effective and consistently reliable source of support to reduce food insecurity. The city and HRA have ramped up their efforts to increase SNAP enrollment and streamline the process. The updated Access NYC, the FoodHelp.nyc campaign to promote SNAP, support for the Paperless Office System (POS), and increased community enrollment sites are extremely welcomed steps to making SNAP more accessible for more families.
- The Department of Education has smartly supported breakfast in the classroom expansion and has worked to increase participation in summer feeding programs so that school-aged children have access to sufficient and healthy foods – critical to their development and capacity to learn - even when school is not in session.
- We applaud the City Council for their prioritization of universal free lunch. Bringing free lunch to all students in stand-alone middle schools was a tremendous start. We appreciate the City's including funding in this year's budget and hope to see universal free lunch expanded to elementary, high school and middle school students in K-8 schools.
- The inclusion of \$17.9 million in the 2016 Executive Budget to expand breakfast in the classroom programs ensures that more students will start the day with a full stomach. Students who eat breakfast are better prepared to learn. We appreciate the City's commitment to this critical step towards eliminating childhood hunger in our city and we urge the Department of Education to prioritize schools with high need student bodies in the rollout.



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**Recommendations**

**1. Increase wages to align with the cost of living and annually index to inflation**

As the City continues to work to raise wages for all New Yorkers, reduce the phase-in timeline line so that the new wage floors are responsive to inflation. All wage increases should be automatically indexed to inflation to maintain the value of the new higher wages over time. Raising the wage floor and enacting an appropriate COLA that is automatically indexed to inflation will keep wages competitive and ensure the recruitment and retention of skilled workers in all sectors. We urge the Council and City to work with state lawmakers to support efforts to increase wages across all of New York.

**2. Support the Emergency Food System to Fill their Gaps**

We applaud the additional \$1.8 million to HRA's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) to provide nutritious food to hundreds of emergency food programs. This was a vitally important step and we urge the Council to baseline this \$1.8 million in the new budget. To further fill these gaps, we also ask City Council members to investigate opportunities to meet the storage, distribution and staffing needs of the Emergency Food Programs in their districts with discretionary funds.

**3. Ensure Reliable Access to Healthy and Nutritious Food for School Children**

Federally funded school meal programs are an effective resource against childhood hunger and they lower the cost of living for low-income families. We hope the City will continue to support and expand school meal programs, increase outreach and reduce barriers to participation.

**4. Improve affordability of healthy food through testing and scaling efforts to develop Healthy Food Retail Environments**

Too often New York City neighborhoods are underserved by grocery stores, leading to a lack of nutritious, affordable food. We urge a concentrated investment in efforts to expand retail access to healthy food helps New Yorkers make and afford healthier choices, such as:

- Health Bucks help make Fruit and Vegetables affordable and attainable at local food stores, including bodegas in neighborhoods where grocery stores are limited.
- Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH) is limited to new construction but can and should work to support and provide assistance to bodegas and small food retail to make incremental improvements, such as the purchase of healthy food, refrigeration, and cooperative purchasing agreements for stores in specific neighborhoods.
- Support Farmers Markets, Green Carts and CSAs to be able to access to EBT technology. Work to provide support and incentives for farmers markets and Green Carts to be located in target neighborhoods. Continue to provide high quality nutrition education at farmers' markets through Stellar Markets program and expand to other community based locations.

**5. Facilitate Comprehensive Benefits Access**



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Federal nutrition programs cannot carry the burden of anti-poverty supports alone. Lowering the cost of living through income supports such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, Childcare Tax Credit, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Child Care and Development Block Grant are critical. Yet families cannot benefit from these programs if they do not know about or cannot access them. We appreciate that the Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Financial Empowerment offers free tax assistance services and financial counseling. We urge the City to expand availability to low-income New Yorkers with additional resources and outreach.

We applaud the City and HRA's progress to better coordinate and streamline the access points to receiving public benefits and services and we urge the City to move towards a single, straightforward application process, available at multiple locations, for any New Yorker to learn about and access the full suite of benefits, entitlements and work supports for which they are eligible.

**6. Ensure high quality education for all students**

We must continue to strengthen our education system and increase the rates of students graduating from high school ready for college and career. The relationship between hunger and educational achievement cannot be overstated. High school graduation rates are lower among those experiencing hunger and in 46% of households with hunger among children, the adults did not have an education beyond high school. Furthermore, higher levels of education are associated with higher rates of income adequacy - only 21% of those with a four-year college degree or more have below adequate incomes, compared to 80% of people without a high school degree. To increase the earning potential of all New Yorkers requires that access to a quality education begins in a child's earliest years, and that resources commensurate with need are available to keep children - particularly those from households and communities below the self-sufficiency standard - progressing along the cradle to college or career continuum.

**7. Target policies and programs, and early pilot rollouts to communities of concentrated poverty**

Food insecurity is especially high in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. Pay careful attention to ensure that the range of underserved communities are targeted with appropriate supports. The expansion of school food programs should focus on schools in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty where the benefits of the program will be felt most strongly. We recognize that implementation of ambitious new programs can be more complicated in neighborhoods and schools with fewer resources and less robust infrastructure, but higher need necessitates a greater investment of operational support. For example, as the implementation of breakfast in the classroom continues, we urge schools with high need receive the support and resources they need to ensure success.

**Conclusion**

Our city's emergency food system is overburdened. Food pantries and soup kitchens face an increased demand and they need sufficient and reliable resources to fill the gap. We applaud the additional \$1.8 million to HRA's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) to provide

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nutritious food to hundreds of emergency food programs. This was a vitally important step and we urge the Council to baseline this \$1.8 million in the new budget.

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But we can't stop there. This complex emergency food system was designed in the 1970s for emergency responses but today to fill gaps that have become chronic.

**Vice Chair**  
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For the hundreds of thousands of working households who cannot afford to meet their basic needs and must chronically rely on the emergency food system to eat, we must rigorously pursue a parallel track of policies and system changes that address the root causes of hunger.

**Treasurer**  
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Let's work together to put more people on a pathway to economic security. The clearest roadmap requires higher wages, career pathways, lower costs of living, and education that is a pathway to college and career:

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- o increase wages to align with cost of living,
- o lower the costs of living through public supports and subsidies,
- o improve affordability of healthy food/ Develop Healthy Food Retail Environments,
- o facilitate comprehensive benefit access,
- o ensure access to high-quality education, and
- o target communities of concentrated poverty with resources commensurate with need.

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Thank you for your time and consideration.

**President & CEO**  
Sheena Wright



**GOD'S LOVE WE DELIVER**  
**TESTIMONY TO THE NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE**  
**"HUNGER IN NYC"**  
**JANUARY 13, 2016**

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify before the Committee and offer our unique perspective on the specific gap that God's Love We Deliver and our medically tailored home-delivered meal program fills in New York City for individuals who are sick and hungry.

**God's Love We Deliver is New York City's leading not-for-profit provider of medically tailored home-delivered meals and nutritional counseling for people living with life-threatening illnesses.** 30 years ago God's Love began with one person's simple, compassionate response to hunger. From the humble beginning of delivering one meal to one dying man, we have now delivered almost 17 million meals to one of the most underserved and isolated populations in our city: those who are sick and unable to take care of their most basic need – the need for food and nutrition. **In CY2015, we delivered more than 1.4 million meals to over 6,200 unduplicated individuals.**

**We believe that being sick and hungry is a crisis that demands an urgent response, which is why we have remained true to three core principles from the very beginning.** When someone calls us for help, we deliver their first meal on the next delivery day, we never charge clients for their meals and we have never had a waiting list. Staying true to these principles has led to tremendous growth in our program. In just the last 8 years, we have seen a 98% increase in demand for our services, which led us to complete a renovation and expansion of our home, to more than double the number of meals we will be able to provide. We serve every demographic and 90% of our clients live at or below the Federal Poverty Level.

Discussions of hunger often leave out the population that is not able to access traditional hunger-relief programs, which require a level of fitness that our clients do not possess. **God's Love is an integral part of the City's safety net**, and is critically important to vulnerable individuals who are sick and ill, many of whom are unable to eat meals from traditional meal providers. In addition, the home-delivered aspect of our meals, 5,800 per day, bring relief to our clients that are often overwhelmed by being unable to shop and cook for themselves.

**At God's Love, nutrition is our signature difference. Our program recognizes that the severity of each client's situation demanded something more than simply delivering food.** Our clients may need their meals pureed or minced or have other dietary modifications, depending on their illness. As part of our commitment to food as medicine, our 7 Registered Dietitian Nutritionists tailor each meal to meet each client's specific medical needs. Knowing the strain on clients who have children and senior caregivers in the same household, we feed the families of our clients. As a key service agency within the local care continuum, we maintain relationships with over 200 community organizations to reach those in need.

Our City is facing a mounting crisis of hunger. Between 2012 and 2014, over 1.4 million New Yorkers - including nearly one in four of the city's children - lived in households that lacked sufficient food. We

know, firsthand, that the effect that nutrition has on health is direct and that food insecure individuals have a higher risk for chronic disease.

Research shows that in the United States, chronic disease represents seven out of ten of the chief causes of death and comprises 70% of annual health care costs. Studies have shown that poor access to food influences dietary intake and leads to worse health in those with these conditions. Furthermore, access to nutrition turns these markers around, producing better health outcomes and saving precious healthcare dollars. **There is a steadily increasing recognition of the role that proper food and sound nutrition counseling play in the management of serious illness, allowing clients to remain at home and avoid or shorten costly stays in hospitals and nursing homes.**

**Currently, the burden to address the need for medically tailored food falls mainly on the private, non-profit sector.** Unless a client has HIV/AIDS, there is no dedicated federal funding stream which provides for medically tailored food for people living with any other illnesses. City funding is critical, if we want to tackle the entire hunger spectrum. Without medically tailored meals, addressing hunger in our diverse community will be difficult.

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

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ioannis Dunn, Policy & Grants Coordinator, God's Love We Deliver

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



**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE  
OVERSIGHT HEARING ON HUNGER  
CHAIR – STEPHEN LEVIN**

Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) is a not-for-profit, volunteer supported and community-based organization committed to national leadership in the fight against AIDS. GMHC serves about 9,800 people with HIV in New York, offering a wide range of comprehensive client services. These services include serving nearly 81,000 hot, nutritious meals in our Peter Kruger Dining Room and operating the Keith Haring Food Pantry, which distributes pantry bags of groceries to our clients that allow them to cook nutritious meals at home. These bags generate nearly 30,000 meals per year. Sadly the ever-increasing cost of food, combined with cuts to food stamps and other support programs, has created a 300-person waiting list for our food pantry.

At no cost to our clients, we serve lunch Monday to Thursday and dinner on Friday, which provides clients, who may have anxiety about food, with a place where they can feel secure and less afraid about being hungry. Meals come at no cost to our clients. The space where we serve meals takes on even deeper levels of support as well. Our dining room is a community room, a family room, a place where people can meet others and build friendships. At meals, our clients exchange information about the challenges of HIV treatment, connection to HIV-specific medical care, and living with HIV. In addition, trained staff nutritionists support clients in developing healthy eating patterns beyond GMHC.

Back in 2013, sequestration meant cuts to our budget across the board, including a 15% cut in vital Ryan White funding. For GMHC's clients, this meant cuts to the food that they need in order to take their medicine and cuts in nutrition counseling. The clients we see under Ryan White are often living on \$12 per day after rent and utilities are paid for.

Despite setbacks, we are committed to our meals programs because we know that HIV attacks the immune system, a group of organs and cells that depend on a healthy diet in order to defend the body against disease, infection, and foreign substances. A healthy diet helps to process the many medications taken by people with HIV, and to combat the side-effects of antiretroviral drugs. Staying healthy for people with HIV thus requires special attention to quantity and quality of food intake.

People with HIV must also receive nutrition in a safe setting. Since many struggle with homelessness and poverty, they are likely to take risks in order to feed themselves and their families. That sometimes means high-risk sexual activity in exchange for food. Additionally, low-income people are more likely to acquire food by less safe or sanitary means yet people with HIV are particularly susceptible to bacteria and pathogens that cause food-borne illnesses.

We know that food pantries are only a part of the solutions needed to affect food insecurity in New York City and keep low-income people with HIV healthy. Food pantries provide necessary relief but do not create opportunities for long-term, independent nourishment. A real solution will require better coordinated federally-funded nutrition benefits, with broader access. State and



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local governments must work to provide better low-income access to fresh produce through programs like Health Bucks, which discounts produce purchases through food stamp benefits. Governments should incentivize the sale of healthy food in low-income areas through tax laws and zoning. The Federal government must also reform agricultural policies in order to boost domestic farm production and consumption and minimize fuel costs.

In the meantime, however, food pantries will be essential to the health of New Yorkers living with HIV and AIDS.

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Testimony of:

Ariel Savransky  
Policy Associate for Food and Economic Security  
Citizens' Committee for Children

Before the  
New York City Council  
Committee on General Welfare

*Oversight – Hunger in NYC*

January 13, 2016

Good morning. My name is Ariel Savransky and I am the Policy Associate for Food and Economic Security at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is a 72-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. I would like to thank Chair Levin and the members of the City Council Committee on General Welfare for holding today's hearing about hunger in New York City.

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

It bears noting that the City Council has long been committed to enhancing the food security of New Yorkers. In fact, today's hearing continues the Council's tradition of holding a hunger oversight hearing each year. The annual hunger hearing is a testament to the Council's dedication to tackling hunger and food insecurity throughout the City.

Sadly, the need to address hunger has not decreased since the last hunger oversight hearing in November of 2014. Recent data show that a staggering number of New Yorkers continue to struggle with poverty, food insecurity, and hunger. According to the most recent U.S. Census data, New York City's overall poverty rate is 20.9 percent, which means that one in every five New Yorkers lives in poverty.<sup>1</sup> Even more sobering is the child poverty rate in New York City, which now stands at 29.6 percent.<sup>2</sup> This translates into about one in three New York City children living in poverty.

In addition, citywide, 1.4 million people live in households that cannot always afford enough food, a large increase from the 2006-2008 time period.<sup>3</sup> This number includes over 400,000 – or about one in five – New York City children who is living in a food insecure home.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, about 1.7 million individuals received SNAP (Food Stamps) benefits in October 2015.<sup>5</sup> As evidenced by these statistics, much work remains to be done to address food insecurity.

Food insecurity and hunger continue to take an immense toll on both the short- and long-term overall well-being of New York City's children. In the immediate, a lack of access to nutritious food has contributed to an obesity rate of 20.7 percent among New York City students in kindergarten through eighth grade.<sup>6</sup> Poor nutrition impacts children's academic outcomes; it not only affects cognitive and psychosocial development and a child's ability to focus in class, but

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<sup>1</sup> United States Census Bureau, *American Fact Finder*, September 2015. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> New York City Coalition Against Hunger. *Working But Hungry: Low Wages and Federal Cut-Backs Keep NYC Hunger Sky High*, 2015. [http://nyccah.org/files/Final%20NYCCAH%20Report%202015%20small\\_0.pdf](http://nyccah.org/files/Final%20NYCCAH%20Report%202015%20small_0.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. *Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Statistics*, October 2015. <https://otda.ny.gov/resources/caseload/2015/2015-10-stats.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Bureau of Epidemiology Services, *FITNESSGRAM Data 2010-2011*.

can also lead to illnesses, which increase school absences.<sup>7</sup> Further, a poor diet can have lifelong health consequences, such as increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

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

**1. Increase School Meal options and participation rates**

School meal programs are critical resources in the fight against childhood hunger and obesity, as they provide children from low-income families with consistent access to nutritionally sound free or reduced-price meals. About 75 percent of the City’s 1.1 million public school students come from families with incomes low enough to qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches,<sup>8</sup> and thus school meal programs have the potential to impact the food security of a large number of children.

Unfortunately, too many children who could benefit from school meal programs do not participate. A number of these children choose not to eat school meals because of the stigma they feel thinking that other children will label them “poor.”

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

To achieve these goals, we offer the following recommendations for the upcoming year:

**A) Ensure successful roll out of Breakfast After the Bell<sup>9</sup> programs citywide**

We are incredibly grateful to Mayor de Blasio and the City Council for including in the FY16 adopted budget funding for the roll-out of Breakfast After the Bell at 141 elementary schools in the 2015-2016 school year with a plan to reach all 530 elementary schools, serving 339,000 students, by FY18.

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<sup>7</sup> Sell, K., Zlotnik, S., Noonan, K., and Rubin, D. (Nov. 2010). The Recession and Food Security. *The Effect of Recession on Child Well-Being*.

<sup>8</sup> According to the federal guidelines, children from families at 130 percent of the federal poverty level qualify for free school meals, while children from families at 185 percent of the federal poverty level qualify for reduced-price meals. Currently in New York City, these categories are used to determine how much the City will be reimbursed for every meal served, rather than what a child will or will not pay in order to receive a meal. Children in New York City public schools do not have to pay for breakfast. Further, in schools where lunch is not free for all, those children who qualify for reduced-price meals are also served meals for free.

<sup>9</sup> Breakfast After the Bell is a program in which breakfast is made a part of the school day instead of being served prior to the school day starting. Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) is a type of Breakfast After the Bell programming in which students eat breakfast in the classroom during the first 10 to 15 minutes of the school day.

According to the annual Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) school breakfast report, New York City's school breakfast participation rates are repeatedly the poorest among major U.S. city and suburban school districts.<sup>10</sup> Breakfast After the Bell is the best way to increase children's participation in school breakfast because it helps to reduce the barriers that otherwise prevent students from eating breakfast at school. For example, Breakfast After the Bell eliminates the stigma some children associate with receiving a free meal in the cafeteria prior to the beginning of the school day. Breakfast After the Bell also decreases parents' stress, as they would otherwise have to rush their children to school early in the morning, before the school day begins, in order to guarantee that their children eat breakfast in the school cafeteria. Because Breakfast After the Bell helps diminish these obstacles, it results in more children actually eating breakfast, which is critical to their healthy development and ability to succeed in school.

Due to the need to increase participation in school breakfast as well as the potential for Breakfast After the Bell to result in many more students eating breakfast, CCC respectfully suggests that the City ensures a successful roll out of this program. Recent reports have indicated that the new breakfasts need to be redesigned and more oversight is needed to ensure that expired products are not among those served to students.

As the City resolves the kinks in the roll-out, it is important not to forget that the current plan only provides Breakfast After the Bell in elementary schools. We urge the city to develop a plan to provide for Breakfast After the Bell in middle and high schools too.

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

Although New York City's participation rates for school lunch are higher than for school breakfast, they are also low. More than one-third of the low-income students who qualify for free or reduced priced lunch do not participate in the program.<sup>11</sup> Like with breakfast, fear of being stigmatized prevents many children, especially teens, from participating. In addition, the current administration of the school lunch program remains burdensome to many parents and school staff; most parents must, each year, fill out an application that requires the disclosure of personal financial information, while in most schools staff must, each day, determine which students do and do not have to pay for their meals.

CCC is a core member of the Lunch 4 Learning campaign, which since the summer of 2013 has sought to make a healthy school lunch free for every New York City public school student. We at CCC and Lunch 4 Learning are incredibly thankful to Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Chair Dromm of the Education Committee, Chair Levin of the General Welfare Committee, and the entire City Council not just for their whole-hearted embrace of this idea, but also for their steadfast efforts to make universal free lunch a

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<sup>10</sup> Food Research and Action Center. School Breakfast Scorecard: 2013-2014 School Year. [http://frac.org/pdf/School\\_Breakfast\\_Scorecard\\_SY\\_2013\\_2014.pdf](http://frac.org/pdf/School_Breakfast_Scorecard_SY_2013_2014.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Community Food Advocates. Building on Success of Universal Free Lunch in Middle Schools: Mayor de Blasio Should Fund Expansion to All New York City Public School Students, 2015. [http://media.wix.com/ugd/fce5d8\\_3fac78f8fe6d4af89bb2850b4d2869f5.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/fce5d8_3fac78f8fe6d4af89bb2850b4d2869f5.pdf)

reality. The Council's prioritization of universal free school lunch has been instrumental in making permanent free school lunch for all students in stand-alone middle schools.

As a result of the implementation of universal school lunch in stand-alone middle schools, an average of 7500 additional students ate lunch each day – an increase of 1,322,000 additional meals served throughout the 2014-2015 school year.<sup>12</sup> Increased participation means fewer students skipping meals due to fear being stigmatized or a family's inability to afford school lunch. Furthermore, according to data from the Robin Hood Foundation, parents would save an average of \$900 per year per child if school lunches were free for all students. The Robin Hood Foundation estimates that a healthy lunch prepared by a parent would cost about \$5<sup>13</sup>, translating into \$900 per year with 180 school days.

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

We also hope to see increased efforts in middle schools to make parents and caregivers aware that universal free school lunch exists at their child's school. In order to improve participation, CCC respectfully suggests that the City further increase outreach efforts to let parents know about the program, including through the use of additional backpack letters to parents with children in standalone middle schools and handing out flyers as parents pick up or drop off their children at school. Furthermore, outreach could be conducted using text messaging, emailing or robo calls. Outreach should not only focus on the existence of this program, but also on the efforts being made to improve the quality of school food.

### **C) Increase participation in the Summer Meals program**

CCC appreciates the Department of Education (DOE) Office of School Food's efforts to feed our City's students nutritious meals during the summer months when school is not in session. We were especially pleased this past summer when the DOE invested in outreach efforts such as creating an app allowing individuals to locate the nearest summer meals sites as well as the daily menus and launching an extensive advertising campaign targeting buses, subways and some subway stations in order to publicize the availability

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<sup>12</sup> Community Food Advocates. Campaign Key Points, 2015.

[http://media.wix.com/ugd/fce5d8\\_9de71cd941824627bcd773be3912e2b9.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/fce5d8_9de71cd941824627bcd773be3912e2b9.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Robin Hood Foundation. Metric Equations, 2014. [https://www.robinhood.org/sites/default/files/user-uploaded-images/Robin%20Hood%20Metrics%20Equations\\_BETA\\_Sept-2014.pdf](https://www.robinhood.org/sites/default/files/user-uploaded-images/Robin%20Hood%20Metrics%20Equations_BETA_Sept-2014.pdf)

of summer meals. These efforts help to ensure parents and caretakers are adequately informed about the existence and locations of summer meals.

The overall summer participation numbers remain very similar to the previous summer, with an increase of only about 18,000 total meals served. While there was a net increase, when looking at breakfast and lunch separately, this past summer there was a decrease of almost 57,000 lunches served.<sup>14</sup> There are numerous reasons for this, but one is likely that there were fewer children participating in summer school this past summer: about 7000 fewer third through eighth graders were required to attend summer school due to a change in state law ruling that test results were not to be used as the sole criteria in deciding whether a student should move up a grade. Instead, a student's progress was also to be considered in this decision.<sup>15</sup>

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

On a related note, CCC continues to advocate for the expansion and preservation of summer program offerings. These programs not only serve as safe places for children to go during the summer where they can engage in activities to foster learning and creativity, but also as places where they have access to summer meals, as summer camps often serve as summer meal sites. According to a survey conducted by the Campaign for Children last year, nearly two-thirds of parents surveyed reported relying on summer camps for meals for their children.<sup>16</sup>

#### **D) Invest in the Department of Education's efforts to continue to improve school food menus and the school food environment**

In recent years, the City has acted to improve the quality of meals served in New York City's public schools. The growth in the number of schools that have salad bars represents one such effort, as do the efforts to source locally, involve students in the menu planning process and implement an international menu for one week every month. The ultimate goal of these efforts is to increase participation in school meals, therefore

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<sup>14</sup> The New York City Office of School Food collected data on summer meal participation for the summer of 2015. These assessments are based on those numbers.

<sup>15</sup> The New York Times. Fewer New York City Students Must Go To School This Summer, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/02/nyregion/fewer-new-york-city-students-must-go-to-school-this-summer.html>

<sup>16</sup> Campaign for Children. Status Report on NYC's After-School System: Demand for Elementary, High School and Summer Programming Remains, 2015. [http://www.campaignforchildreennyc.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/After-School-Summer-Report\\_final.pdf](http://www.campaignforchildreennyc.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/After-School-Summer-Report_final.pdf)

ensuring more students are fed and able to learn. We urge City leaders to continue to invest in these efforts to expand participation in and improve the quality of school meals to alleviate hunger among our city's students.

We close this discussion with the recognition that school food is not simply about the meals served to students. For example, school gardens and nutrition education programs help children learn about healthy meals and their larger environment. The DOE's Office of School Food has been implementing the Garden to Café program connecting school gardens to cafeterias and working to increase students' knowledge of healthy food, farming and the local school system. Programs such as these are vital components of children's education that should be supported and promoted.

## **2. Strengthen the anti-hunger safety net**

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

Moreover, these programs function as economic engines, bringing federal resources to local supermarkets, corner stores, farmers' markets, and even Green Carts. Research shows that there is \$1.80 of economic activity resulting from every \$1 of SNAP spent. Further, SNAP receipt has been proven to lift a significant number of Americans above the poverty level. SNAP kept about 2 million children out of poverty in 2010 and lifted 1.3 million children out of deep poverty.<sup>17</sup> In 2012, child poverty would have been three percentage points higher without SNAP. However, in New York City, about 500,000 eligible individuals do not receive the benefits for which they qualify.<sup>18</sup>

We are pleased that the City has continued to employ initiatives that increase the number of eligible New Yorkers who enroll in SNAP. For example, the Medicaid data match has helped identify thousands of New Yorkers who qualify for SNAP. The Council has also provided support to non-profits so that they could conduct SNAP outreach. Furthermore, Mayor de Blasio and HRA launched a new citywide outreach campaign in the form of a website – [foodhelp.nyc](http://foodhelp.nyc) – to spread the word about SNAP to New Yorkers who qualify for SNAP benefits but are not receiving them. We hope that the City will continue such efforts, as well as explore the creation of similar outreach to WIC-eligible New Yorkers, in order to increase participation in that program.

On a related note, we are grateful that the Council has recognized the beneficial role that farmers' markets and federally-funded food programs play in helping New Yorkers access healthy, local foods. This recognition is evident in the Council's historic support for the use of

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<sup>17</sup> United States Department of Agriculture Office of Research and Analysis, *Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates: Fiscal Year 2002 to Fiscal Year 2009, August 2011.*

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ORR/menu/Published/SNAP/FILES/Participation/Trends2002-09.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> NYC Human Resources Administration. *New York City Estimated Food Stamp Participation Rates: 2006-2010.* [http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/facts/snap/nyc\\_estimated\\_food\\_stamp\\_participation\\_rates\\_2006\\_2010.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/downloads/pdf/facts/snap/nyc_estimated_food_stamp_participation_rates_2006_2010.pdf). This metric has not been updated since 2010.

SNAP at the City's farmers' markets.<sup>19</sup> As you are aware, the number of New Yorkers who make SNAP purchases at farmers' markets grows substantially each year, as a result of the DOHMH Health Bucks program and the repeated Council distribution of one-year funds to support EBT technology at the markets. Given the positive impact the ability to use SNAP at farmers' markets has on the food security of New Yorkers and the local economy, we urge the City to ensure all New York City farmers' markets and Green Carts are equipped with EBT technology, and that this funding is baselined in the budget.

Furthermore, we believe that there is more that New York can do to increase the take-up rate for the WIC fruit and vegetable voucher at farmers' markets, such as working with the state to ensure WIC is added to the EBT benefits' card before 2020 (when it is federally required) and making it easier for farmers to enroll in WIC by making WIC, FMNP and SNAP all on one application form.<sup>20</sup>

While SNAP benefits are a critical component of ensuring the food security of New Yorkers, there are many hungry New Yorkers who are not eligible to participate in the program and eligible New Yorkers who are not enrolled. Further, federal government cuts to SNAP, which occurred in November 2013, decreased the amount of SNAP benefits that New Yorkers received.<sup>21</sup> The average SNAP benefit in New York City declined from \$162 per person per month in December 2012 to about \$148 per person per month in September 2015.<sup>22</sup> In addition, Emergency Food Programs (EFPs) also saw a substantial growth in visitors preceding the SNAP cuts, as a result of both the recession and Hurricane Sandy. This benefit reduction, known as the Hunger Cliff, resulted in a loss of about 16 million meals, and although emergency food providers are working to fill that meal gap, resources are not adequate and the gap continues to exist at about 100 million meals.<sup>23</sup> Food pantries and soup kitchens report increases in the number of visitors, increasing operating hours, running out of food, reducing the number of meals in their pantry bags and turning people away during the month of September 2015.<sup>24</sup>

Given these circumstances, EFPs need more funding so that they can attempt to serve the New Yorkers who seek their help. We ask that the City increase the Emergency Food Assistance Program baseline funding to a Fiscal Year 2017 funding level of \$15.3 million to account for increased demand and cost of food.

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<sup>19</sup> Data from our 2013 report *From Farm to Table: The Use of Federally-Funded Food Programs at New York City Farmers' Markets* show, use of SNAP, the WIC Fruit & Vegetable check, and the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) in our City's farmers' markets positively impacts both the food security of low-income families and the incomes of regional farmers

<sup>20</sup> Citizens' Committee for Children, *From Farm to Table: The Use of Federally-Funded Food Programs at New York City Farmers' Markets*, May 2013. <http://www.cccnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CCCFarmersMarketReport.May-2013.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> A household of three lost approximately \$29 per month – more than 20 meals.

<sup>22</sup> New York City Coalition Against Hunger. *Working But Hungry: Low Wages and Federal Cut-Backs Keep NYC Hunger Sky High*, 2015. [http://nyccah.org/files/Final%20NYCCA%20Report%202015%20small\\_0.pdf](http://nyccah.org/files/Final%20NYCCA%20Report%202015%20small_0.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Food Bank for New York City. *Hunger Cliff NYC: Bridging a City's Monthly 5.3 Million Meal Loss*, 2015. <http://www.foodbanknyc.org/files/dmfile/HungerCliffNYC2015ResearchBrief.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Id.

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

New York City has many communities where residents have limited access to healthy, affordable food. We support the initiatives that aim to increase the presence of healthy and fresh food retail outlets in underserved communities. For example, CCC has long supported the Green Carts program, advocating for its establishment and then producing a report about the first year of its implementation. We are pleased that the number of Green Carts equipped with EBT technology has grown. We are also very supportive of the proposal for expansion of the Garden and Greening program for NYCHA residents including commitment to expand the scale of urban farming ventures and food producing gardens projected to produce four tons of fresh produce and engage about 500 community residents in programming.<sup>25</sup>

CCC also advocated for FRESH at its inception, and we are so pleased that since 2009, twenty projects have been approved, included ten that have been completed.<sup>26</sup> We are grateful for Mayor de Blasio's investment, announced last March, of \$150 million over 12 years, to enhance the capacity of the Hunts Point Food Distribution Center. Additionally, we are very pleased with the creation of the new Building Healthy Communities initiative, which seeks to improve the health of New Yorkers in 12 high-poverty neighborhoods by improving opportunities for physical activity, increasing access to nutritious and affordable food and promoting public safety. By redesigning neighborhoods and bringing programming to the people who need it, this public private partnership can potentially help to alleviate the high rates of crime, as well as the high rates of obesity and diabetes often disproportionately present in these neighborhoods. Along the same lines, we applaud the creation of the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Center for Health Equity, which will work to reduce health disparities and promote health equity by directing resources to high-need neighborhoods including those in the Bronx, East and Central Harlem, and the North and Central Brooklyn. These are areas disproportionately affected by food insecurity.

We believe that more investment is needed to bring fresh, healthy foods into all New York City neighborhoods. We suggest that the City should build upon and learn from the successes of the FRESH program, using it to upgrade outdated infrastructure at grocery stores in neighborhoods that lack sufficient fresh food retailers. Such upgrades should include efforts to ensure that these retailers, including and especially smaller stores and bodegas, have the capacity to obtain and refrigerate fresh produce, fish, and meats. We also hope that the City will consider additional grants or incentives that would encourage food retailers to improve or further develop their outlets in underserved neighborhoods. This may require some creative thinking in considering about both how to assist smaller retailers in acquiring fresh produce, including exploration of bulk or cooperative purchasing arrangements for groups of small stores, and how to negotiate the Hunts Point market.

We hope that the City will explore ways to help Green Cart vendors serve New Yorkers year-round, including through partnerships with CBOs and other agencies, so that vendors can receive more technical assistance in order to acquire food; be housed indoors so that they continue to

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<sup>25</sup> The City of New York. Food Metrics Report 2015. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycfood/downloads/pdf/2015-food-metrics-report.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Id.

work and serve their communities during inclement winter months; and find more targeted placements, especially near NYCHA facilities.

We also urge the City to explore not only how to get food into underserved neighborhoods, but also how to get residents from underserved neighborhoods to outlets that sell affordable food. For example, we would like to see the exploration of expanded use of shuttle services – bus services linking NYCHA residents and other community members in neighborhoods that are hard to reach via public transportation with food retail outlets, or increased use of mobile markets.

We hope that the city will continue to invest in initiatives such as Building Healthy Communities and the Center for Health Equity, that support efforts to improve the health of individuals in high-poverty communities through increasing neighborhood access to healthy foods.

#### **4. Implement policies that will alleviate poverty in New York City**

Food insecurity and economic insecurity go hand in hand. Unfortunately many New Yorkers, including those who are working, are simply not earning enough to ensure their families' financial security, or even maintain their families at the federal poverty level. This leaves working New Yorkers ill-equipped to ensure that even the basic needs of their families are met. When people work full time, they should make enough money that they are not living in poverty. It is time to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and continue to expand living wage jobs.

In fact, families that are food insecure often have at least one member of the household that is working. Raising the minimum wage represents an essential part of a multi-pronged approach that is needed to address the overwhelming costs of living in New York City, as well as the distressing poverty and hunger rates. CCC is very supportive of Mayor de Blasio's plan to bring all City contracted workers to \$15-per-hour by 2018 with funding we understand will be included in the FY 17 preliminary budget. An increase in the minimum wage will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the State and City economies. Providing low-income earners with more money will serve to increase their households' purchasing power, and their demand for goods and services. Such boosted demand can result in more spending and job creation, thereby benefiting all New Yorkers.

Furthermore, according to a simulation study conducted by the Urban Institute with funding from the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New York, and UJA-Federation of New York, increasing the minimum wage would have substantial positive effects in lifting New Yorkers out of poverty.<sup>27</sup> This is taking into account two issues accompanying a minimum wage increase: the extent to which a mandatory wage increase for some workers would result in wage increases for other workers (“spillover effects”) and whether a minimum wage increase would result in any job loss. The study modeled the minimum wage increases both with and without these two potential impacts.

As the minimum wage increase is implemented, New York City will need to assess how higher wages may impact income taxes or eligibility for safety net benefits such as Medicaid, child care,

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<sup>27</sup> Urban Institute, *How Much Could Policy Changes Reduce Poverty in New York City*, March 2015. <http://fpwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Anti-Poverty-Report-Final.pdf>

public assistance, SNAP and WIC. There is an opportunity to accompany the minimum wage increase with programs such as tax policy initiatives that offset these effects.<sup>28</sup>

We are very supportive of the new paid parental leave policy, providing six weeks of paid time off for maternity, paternity, adoption and foster care leave at 100 percent of salary for approximately 20,000 managerial and original jurisdiction NYC employees. It is important that the city invest in policies that allow parents to both work and care for their children. Research has shown that a paid family leave policy has the potential to result in positive effects for parents and families in terms of development of the child and the physical, emotional and social well-being of both parents and children.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, we ask that the city continue to work to expand this policy to include represented workers as well.

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

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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<sup>28</sup> Id.

<sup>29</sup> National Center for Children in Poverty, *Paid family Leave: Strengthening Families and Our Future*, April 2012. [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text\\_1059.pdf](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_1059.pdf)



**CITYMEALS**  
ON WHEELS

Oversight hearing on Hunger  
General Welfare Committee  
January 13, 2016

Testimony submitted by: Rachel Sherrow  
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Citymeals-on-Wheels  
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Rachel@citymeals.org

My name is Rachel Sherrow and I am the Associate Executive Director at Citymeals-on-Wheels. I would like to begin by thanking the Council for their continued support of aging services and Citymeals-on-Wheels which will help to deliver over 2 million meals to over 18,000 homebound elderly citywide this year.

As most of you know, Citymeals-on-Wheels is a not-for-profit agency working in a public/private partnership with the New York City Department for the Aging. The Department funds the meals that homebound elderly receive Mondays through Fridays, and Citymeals-on-Wheels funds the same network of providers to deliver weekend and holiday meals. On the days the city does not provide a meal, Citymeals steps in to prevent our aging neighbors from being without food or human company. In fact, Citymeals, as an added benefit generates revenue for New York City through the federal government's cash in lieu of commodities program which

reimburses DFTA approximately 67 cents for every meal funded by Citymeals. All of this money goes toward the city-funded weekday meals program, bringing in over \$1.3 million last fiscal year and an additional 191,000 home delivered meals for those who need it. In-home services like meals on wheels are incredibly vital to those who are hungry and frail, and often hidden behind their doors.

Throughout our nation and right here in NYC, our population is aging, with 17% of our city over the age of 60 and by 2050 the number of older adults will double.<sup>1</sup> Living longer on fixed incomes means more struggle over access to food. In 2012, New York City's older adults experienced an increase in poverty from 16.5% to 19.1%.<sup>2</sup>

Because income for older adults remains fixed, or worse, declines, many older adults experience increased difficulty affording healthy food. According to the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity, 1 in 3 New Yorkers over the age of 65 live in poverty. A Hunger Study conducted by LiveOn NY (formerly Council of Senior Centers and Services) shows that 35% of older adults in NYC are living with food insecurity, or hunger. In addition, an inability to resist disease as people age may be related to hunger and malnutrition which can exacerbate cardiovascular disease, hypertension, osteoporosis, cancer, diverticulitis, and diabetes.

Compounding elder hunger is the reality that older adults underutilize SNAP benefits at alarming rates, with data showing that 56% (over 272,000) of older New Yorkers who qualify for the SNAP benefit having not enrolled. Among the reasons older adults do not enroll in SNAP, the most common barriers include stigma or misunderstanding, apprehension about the process and government systems, and physical obstacles such as travel distance or unwelcoming environments. It is also recognized that SNAP not only benefits the senior by putting additional money in their pocket, there is also an economic impact on the community. The USDA has reported that for every \$5 in new SNAP benefits, there is \$9 in economic development for the community.

Because of this, only 1/3 of those found eligible within this population are receiving the help they need and deserve. Citymeals-on-Wheels together in a partnership with LiveOn NY, started an outreach program in Queens, which has currently expanded into Brooklyn, to assess and help enroll those homebound elderly who were fast tracked onto the meals on wheels program but have yet to get a full assessment from case management due to wait lists. Since 2014, with only one social worker, we have been able to screen over 520 meal recipients, make over 265 home visits and have 202 already receiving benefits which are on average, \$117 per month. In addition we are also screening for SCRIE and Medicare Savings Plans. This assistance will help lift some of the financial burdens our

elderly neighbors have been coping, with and helps to bring much needed federal dollars into the state.

However, more needs to be done to get food to those who need it and cannot access it themselves; Citymeals developed a program that delivers supplemental food to those who are most hungry and poor. Our Mobile Food Pantry program mirrors the pantry programs around the city except for the fact that our homebound elderly aren't able to get to them or carry the bags of food home. This program began in 2011 in the South Bronx and has been replicated in Upper Manhattan, Central Brooklyn and parts of Queens and is currently serving 550 homebound meal recipients. Unfortunately although we know the need is greater, Citymeals is unable to expand the program without additional funding. Thus many are still without and remain hungry, having only the one meal delivered daily.

Citymeals-on-Wheels is the city's lifeline for food not only on weekends and holidays but also in times of emergency for homebound elderly. With our warehouse in Brooklyn we are able to prepare and maintain emergency shelf stable meal packages for any and all issues that arise locally and on a city-wide scale as was demonstrated with Superstorm Sandy and the snowstorms we had last winter. Between January and March, we delivered over 95,000 additional shelf stable meals to ensure our homebound meal

recipients would have food on hand if their daily delivery was unable to get through because of the inclement weather.

Citymeals on Wheels together, with the Department for the Aging, and The New York City Council, are desperately trying to keep over 18,000 elderly New Yorkers and growing, fed 365 days a year plus some extra. Bringing a meal to the door is one less struggle for the homebound to worry about financially. In addition, this food delivery is one way to prevent them from slipping into more expensive kinds of care. Evidence does support the fact that programs like meals on wheels which allows older adults to age in place, may help save costs for families, government and our health systems.<sup>3</sup> Our additional programs like helping recipients access benefits like SNAP and SCRIE, and our Mobile Food Pantry help those most vulnerable also age in place. This is a savings in Medicaid costs that the city would bear if these economically disadvantaged and elderly neighbors of ours were institutionalized instead. It is in their interest and ours to keep them with us, right here in the communities where they have lived for so long.

We hope you, our partner in city government, will help us to continue to advocate on behalf of those who are often forgotten and marginalized.

**As we move through our 34<sup>th</sup> year, we thank you so much for working with us and I hope we can count on all of your support once again this year.**

<sup>1</sup> 2000 to 2010 Census, as reported in NYC Department for the Aging's "Census 2000: Changes in the elderly population of NYC 2000-2010." <sup>2</sup> DFTA Annual Plan Summary 2015-2016  
<sup>3</sup> Measuring the costs and savings of aging in place. 2013. (Accessed December 3, 2014, at [http://www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/em/em\\_archive.html](http://www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/em/em_archive.html)).

Testimony of Anita Fein, representing St. Edward Food Pantry, Staten Island, NY

Thank you very much, Council Member Levin 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 City. Begun in 1928 as a ministry of the Franciscan Handmaids of Mary Sisters, the Sisters have been feeding the poor and those in need living on the South Shore of Staten Island. As a Client's Choice Food Pantry, we serve healthy and nutritious meals to families who come to us in need from across the Island. **Clients come across the Island, some willing to take two to three buses just to get food from us in order to feed their families.** Of the 4,900 families we serve, 52% live in the communities of Tottenville, Pleasant Plains, Annadale, Eltingville, Great Kills, just to name a few of the south shore communities where they live. In the past, it was thought that people who lived in these neighborhoods were affluent and not in need of our services. Times have changed, due to the changing economy: rising food costs, housing, increase in utility rates and transportation costs, creating what is now called the Working Poor.

St. Edward has 43% of its clients 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 in not only new clients, but the return of many clients who stopped coming to our Pantry in need of emergency food. With the new clientele, there has been an increased request from people seeking to receive 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 the table. **The number of people coming to our Food Pantry has been steadily increasing over the years. In 2013, we served just over 20,000; 2014 it was 22,200 and in 2015, it was nearly 24,000 adults, children and elderly looking for food.**

What we are looking for from the City is additional funding through HRA's Emergency Food Assistance Program, otherwise known as EFAP. Ours is not the only emergency 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 are seeing increased numbers; some are even running out of food due to the sheer volume of people coming to them in need of food.

At present, St. Edward Food Pantry, like many other emergency food programs in New York City, receive EFAP ~~deliveries~~ <sup>FAVS/UC</sup> twice a year in accordance with the Fiscal year of the City. Currently, HRA/EFAP <sup>FAVS/UC</sup> allocates what is sent to each feeding program. However, each emergency food program does not have choice over the type nor frequency of food delivered - we are sent specific items from a pre-determined list of foods and Food Bank For New York City distributes to the various feeding programs Citywide per HRA.

There are two problems with this:

- 1) For a Pantry the size of St. Edward, which operates out of two tractor trailer shipping containers, we never know when the monthly allocation of food from this funding source will be delivered to our Food Pantry. Given our limited storage space it is difficult to control our inventory when we do not have choice over EFAP. We have gone to the extremes with this: from running low on items due to when these foods are sent, to having two orders come in nearly back to back, thus overwhelming our space. If we knew exactly when during the month, these shipments would be coming, we would be able to make room necessary for storage.
- 2) As a client choice program that serves with dignity, predetermined orders from EFAP do not allow needed flexibility nor allowances for what we have distributed in a month. At times, I have joked that our storage unit resembles an "aquarium" due to the overage of cases of canned mackerel, packets of tuna fish and canned salmon. This leads to not only cases accumulating month after month as my clients can only take so much canned fish, but if it sits in my Pantry, it could have been used by another Food Pantry for their clientele who may want fish.

There is only one solution to this: allow emergency food programs to pick and choose items from Food Bank's inventory using our EFAP monthly allocation. In the past, EFAP recipients were able to order items of our choosing during the second half of the year through Food Bank. In this case, our clients were satisfied with what we were able to order and we did not have food sitting and accumulating month after month.

Another item that our clients greatly appreciated was when we were able to provide frozen meat, such as ground turkey, ground beef, chicken (both whole and parts) and frozen vegetables. In the past, a separate allocation was given to EFAP recipients allowing us to order these items, as it is costly for us to order on our own.

One final ask is for funding to be given to emergency food providers for General Operating 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 properly, some organizations like St. Edward have part time staff, which is necessary to help maintain the smooth and continuous service to a community in need.

Thank you once again for letting me speak on behalf of St. Edward Food Pantry. With the City's help and assistance, we can continue to serve the families who are coming to us in need. Along with Food Bank for New York City, we hope to shrink the meal gap that exists not only in Staten Island, but the entire City of New York.

Respectfully submitted on January 13, 2016 by Anita Fein, St. Edward Food Pantry.



Testimony: General Welfare Committee of the New York City Council  
January 13, 2016

West Side Campaign Against Hunger would like to thank Council Member Steve Levin, Chair of the General Welfare Committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY2017 preliminary New York City Budget, and specifically, the need to increase funding for the city's Emergency Food Assistance Program, more commonly referred to as EFAP.

Founded in 1979, West Side Campaign Against Hunger (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, 564 families enroll in 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 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.

West Side Campaign Against Hunger serves a diverse population of low-income New York City residents. Most of our clients live in Northern Manhattan and the South Bronx, though WSCAH is open to individuals and families across the city. Our clients include children, youth, adults and older adults. In FY2015, 27% were 17 years old or under, 49% ranged from 18 to 54 years old, and 24% were 55 and older. Seventy-three percent of our clients were Hispanic, and 21% were African American. Fifty-eight percent of our clients were female and 42%, male. While WSCAH's customers have diverse backgrounds, they have much in common: they all are struggling 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, behavioral 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, like Elianna.

Elianna is a married, sixteen-year-old mother of a ten-month old son, who arrived from Mexico a little over a year ago. She attends high school and lives with her husband, who is 21. Her husband works in construction, but the work is seasonal, sporadic, and without benefits. They neither speak fluent English nor have family who can help them. They struggling to pay rent, buy food, and provide for the baby. A social worker at Elianna's son's daycare center referred her to West Side Campaign Against Hunger, and the first thing we did was provide her with three-days-worth of healthy food for each member of the family. Our counselors also found that because of her age, Elianna was eligible for health insurance under the Child Health Plus program. We also referred her to one of our partners, New York Legal Assistance Group, for help with her immigration issues. By taking the time to speak to her about her situation and understand her needs, we were able to get her food and health insurance, and refer her to other resources that could help her family.

Advocacy for increased funding, as well as campaigns to expand school lunch such as The Lunch 4 Learning Campaign (L4L), is crucial to ending food insecurity. L4L is a coalition of anti-hunger organizations and allies throughout New York City that advocate 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 and emergency food providers will have more resources to effectively meet the ever growing needs 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 Assistance Program.

COJO of Staten Island (Kosher)  
**food pantry**



January 12, 2016

I would like to thank both, the General Welfare Committee and the Chairman Steve Levin for all their support for COJO Kosher Food Pantry of Staten Island over the past 36 years.

COJO of Staten Island has been a central organization for all Jewish organizations of Staten Island.

My name is Stuart Cohen, and in October 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 serve over 300 %.

We currently provide over 500 people per week with kosher meals including the customary chicken and gefilte fish for shabbat dinner. In the month of December 2014 we fed over 36,000 meals to all communities.

During this time COJO received two awards, first as the most improved pantry from City Harvest and the second one from Food Bank for most referrals using the "TEN Tracker" that allows COJO to connect our community to a variety of social services.

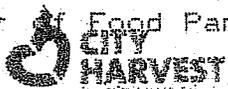
In addition COJO has 8 interfaith community dinners a month at three different churches. We, at COJO, believe in feeding the whole community on Staten Island.

If I had to recall one moment, it would have been this past Thanksgiving. We had two community dinners at two churches. At the second dinner we came across a woman with four children who had no food, and we gave her enough food for two weeks making all the hard work worth it.

At COJO, working with Food Bank through "TEN Tracker" system, we are able to provide more social service referrals than any food pantry on Staten Island.

Never the less we ask for the help of all city council people, elected officials and the General Welfare Committee to help Cojo Kosher Food Pantry to feed more people with the help of any additional funding they can support us with.

Thank you,  
Stuart Cohen  
Director of Food Pantry and Social Service



984 Post Avenue Staten Island N.Y. 10302 | phone 718 720 4047 | email [info@cojosi.org](mailto:info@cojosi.org)



Soup Kitchen Locations:

FLATBUSH/MIDWOOD  
**1372 Coney Island Ave**  
Brooklyn NY 11230

BORO PARK  
**4910 14th Ave**  
Brooklyn NY 11219

QUEENS/REGO PARK  
**98-08 Queens Blvd**  
Rego Park NY 11374

Testimony Prepared by:  
**Site Coordinator of Masbia Flatbush**  
**Patrick Jean-Baptiste**

for the  
**Committee on General Welfare**

on  
**Hunger in New York City**  
**January 13, 2016**

on behalf of  
**Masbia Soup Kitchen Network**

## **Introduction**

First, I want to start by thanking Councilman Levin, Chair of General Welfare Committee, for giving Masbia Soup Kitchen Network the opportunity to come here today and talk about some issues that us and many other soup kitchens face here in New York City. My name is Patrick Jean- Baptiste and I have been involved with Masbia since 2012. I started as a volunteer, but now I am currently the site coordinator for our Flatbush location in Brooklyn. Masbia is a soup kitchen network comprised of three locations spread throughout Queens and Brooklyn. Serving over 1.5 million meals every year and growing, we pride ourselves in serving our guests with dignity by creating a restaurant like atmosphere in our kitchens. Anyone is able to receive a hot, kosher meal with no questions asked. Masbia is a volunteer based organization, so 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, during which we are closed. Our clientele continues to grow every year, showing that more and more people are in need of our help. Over 1.5 million people in New York City are at risk for going hungry so we hope that these following points will help improve, or at least give you insight to the issues we encounter on a daily basis.

In Exhibit A, you are able to see a 350% increase our total meal counts from our pantry and dinner services over the last 3 years. The amount of meals served has been ever increasing as the years go by in almost all of the locations. In the case of Boro Park, we were closed for a few months for FY 2015. Fortunately as of this week, we secured a lease for our new Boro Park location. Although we have locations in two boroughs, it does not accurately represent the total population in need. We serve over 1.5 millions meals which is just a portion of those who seek emergency food, putting perspective to how large the problem of food insecurity is in New York City.

## **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 the purchasing, is the best solution to many of the systematic based problems.

The federal government creates their list of foods available to emergency food programs based on what food is in a price stabilization program. It is understandable that The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) offers a range of proteins, for example, like peanut butter, beans, canned beef stew, tuna etc. According to "MyPlate" guidelines displayed in Exhibit B, both peanut butter and tuna fulfill the same point requirement for the protein category, but tuna is more expensive than peanut butter. If the goal is to have enough food for everyone, then is it not logical to buy the cheaper protein option since the city's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) does not have to do price stabilization and is on a limited budget? Why does EFAP need variety in their selections?

Another point that I want to bring up that shows why we should be in control of our spending is that EFAP does not procure products for us that comply with the MyPlate portion sizes. By comparing "MyPlate" in Exhibit B with the items in Exhibit C, you can see that we receive 2oz. tuna packets but the serving size for 1 point is 5 oz., leaving us with a dilemma of whether to provide 4oz. or 6oz. The same problem is seen in the grape juice in Exhibit C where the bottle is 32 oz. but the serving size worth 1 point for juice is a minimum of 46 oz. Along the same lines, we often receive odd amounts of items that we are unable to use at one point of time because there are not enough. EFAP knows our clientele size so I question why do we receive these hard to use amounts? The discrepancy of the required product sizes and small quantities creates more issues.

Aside from the problems with food sizes, the types of food offered contradicts the overarching goals for the health of the city. The use of fresh produce is constantly promoted. For example, the city invested in the allowance of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) at green markets in order to promote fresh produce for low income families. By contrast In the city's own program to the low income, only shelf stable items are readily

available to soup kitchens. In addition to fresh produce being healthier than canned, it is also more appealing to our clients; especially for kids. As a child, I remember eating canned vegetables from the soup kitchen my family patronized and it was not a good experience.

To further support our claim, the city buying food in bulk is not cost effective. The added transportation costs to deliver the food to individual locations diminishes the money saved in buying in bulk. In addition to buying in bulk for the purpose for long term use, the price of the item is more compared to buying items for the short term. The long term price factors in the fluctuation in the market value which ends up being more expensive than buying for immediate use.

We also are not notified of when the deliveries will be sent. This is a problem since we may not have enough volunteers scheduled that day to unload the items. Food Bank does call us ahead of time that we are receiving a delivery, but we never know if EFAP is added on.

**All EFAP members receive direct cash support for rent and utilities. The same level of documentation can be applied to food purchases. Cutting out the middle man will also be environmentally efficient AKA “green” and reduce traffic of city trucks on the streets.**

If the system will not change to direct funding, there are two takeaways:

1. If there are still soup kitchens and pantries in the city that run out of food, EFAP should reduce the types of food offered to those that get the most poundage for a particular nutritional category. For example, do not bid tuna vendors against each other but rather bid all proteins against each other.
2. Even if we do not go there, we should at least not have the same items in EFAP as shown in Exhibit D that are already published in TEFAP, as shown in Exhibit E. The TEFAP item list is published early in the year and the list is regularly available on the website. However, we often receive repetitive items from both EFAP and TEFAP which can cause problems for us depending on the situation. For example, if TEFAP has many pasta options listed, EFAP should ideally send pasta sauce. Hypothetically, the worst case scenario would be receiving sauce from both programs with no pasta to give. In the past, we received salmon from both programs but we did not have enough grains for that pantry week. Items should compliment each other so that they can be utilized more efficiently.

### **Non-EFAP Related Suggestions**

We believe that many of the smaller issues soup kitchens face can be solved by having the city cooperate with soup kitchens with little added cost. Recently, we started utilizing the city sanitation to collect our garbage at our Flatbush location twice a week. However, we still pay for a private company to collect the garbage for the remaining days due to the amount of garbage that we have to throw out. In Queens, we do not have city sanitation at all because the location is behind a bus shelter and we are located on a street with no residential pick ups. Public schools receive pick up everyday due to their large volume of garbage. It would be extremely helpful and very inexpensive to the city if all soup kitchens have the same status as schools. Thousands of dollars that we could have used towards food is spent on sanitation. By The Way commercial sanitation does not recycle.

The next concern I have, that would be both beneficial to the city and all soup kitchens, is the use of police officers for crowd control. The lines extend onto the streets and in front of other storefronts, causing unintended disruption to local businesses. Having a couple of officers help control the lines and maintain order will make our process calmer and decrease the unintentional disturbances we cause to our neighbors. We

have tried many times to have an officer present on these days but our requests were never heard. In return with helping us, the police force will get to do “{community policing” and increase police-community relations.

The Summer Youth Employment Program is now offering positions all year round . We believe that emergency food providers should be given priority for job placements since the issue of hunger demands a growing need for help. Operating a food pantry used to be more simplistic in the past because it was mainly about distributing food. Because the shift has moved away from just about the food and more towards adhering to systems like client choice and “MyPlate”, it requires more labor for the pantry to operate. Thus, emergency food providers need more hands in order to function in today’s world.

When the Department of Health sent out letters to food establishments to stop using styrofoam, our disposable costs increased drastically because we now have to use paper/plastic. I am sure that the city can find ways to help us on that issue by either providing a loophole for emergency food programs or helping with the costs. For example, Councilman Brad Lander’s bill regarding the reduction of plastic bag use will require businesses to charge 10 cents for a plastic bag. However, this bill exempts emergency food providers. It is possible for policies to be considerate towards soup kitchens when it involves offering more city services. Addressing our concerns would improve the efficiency and be cost saving to not just us, but all soup kitchens.

The last point I want to make deals with the numerous health inspections we receive. The Health Department, EFAP, Food Bank, United Way and City Harvest all conduct site inspections which seems redundant to us. We understand the importance of adhering to health codes but there is an over zealotry on inspections when the focus should be about the larger problems on food. I am not suggesting this because we are afraid of inspections. We just believe that the time and money spent should be focused on the larger issue at hand.

### **Most Important Point**

All of these ideas are about how to tweak and improve the systems in place from within, but the size and funding of the program is miniscule. With the current budget, the city buys 10 million dollars worth of food as an insurance for 1.5 million people who are at risk of going hungry. This breaks down to a yearly allotment of \$6 worth of emergency food per person. It is clearly not enough, but this is what the current situation is. The budget for food is way too small to help a population that is very large. If the goal is to make sure soup kitchens and pantries do not run out of food, then the overall change needed is to increase the budget. I am unsure of what the right number is, but I do know that it is mutiple times higher than what the budget is currently set to. Thank you for your time. Any questions?

## Exhibit A

### Total Meal Breakdown For Fiscal Years 2013-2015

	Queens Pantry Meals	Queens Hot Meals	Total	Flatbush Pantry Meals	Flatbush Hot Meals	Total	Boro Park Pantry Meals	Boro Park Hot Meals	Total	Yearly Total
2013	150,570	32,092	182,662	126,441	29,871	156,312	82,260	36,522	118,782	457,756
2014	477,054	30,930	507,984	312,165	29,127	341,292	398,574	35,880	434,454	1,283,730
2015	758,889	33,171	792,060	431,676	28,876	460,552	319,959	21,450	341,409	1,594,567

## Exhibit B:

# How to Pack a Balanced Pantry Bag

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

### RECOMMENDED QUANTITY

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

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

Fresh Produce .....4 Pieces or  
1 Head/Bunch or  
1 Pound

Dried Fruit .....15 oz  
Canned Fruit .....15 oz  
Frozen Fruit .....12-16 oz  
100% Fruit Juice .....46-48 oz

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

Fresh Produce .....4 Pieces or  
1 Head/Bunch or  
1 Pound

Canned Vegetables .....15 oz  
Frozen Vegetables .....16 oz  
Vegetable Juice .....46-48 oz

**GRAINS**  
1 ITEM=12 SERVINGS

Bread .....1 Loaf  
Rolls or Bagels .....6 each  
Rice or Pasta .....16 oz  
Oatmeal .....18 oz  
Cold Cereal .....12-16 oz

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

Fluid Milk .....32 oz/1 quart or  
.....4 x 8-oz

Dry Milk .....1 Envelope  
Cottage Cheese ...16 oz (2 items)  
Yogurts .....4 x 6-oz  
Cheese .....8 oz (2 items)  
Dairy Alternative .....32 oz  
(collard greens/kale, fish with bones, soy products)

**PROTEIN**  
1 ITEM=4 OZ PROTEIN

Dried Beans .....1 lb (2 items)  
Canned Beans .....15 oz  
Peanut Butter ...18 oz (3 items)  
Canned Stew or Chili .....15 oz  
Eggs .....6  
Frozen Meat/Fish ...8 oz (2 items)  
Tuna .....1 x 5-oz cans  
Salmon .....15 oz can (2 items)

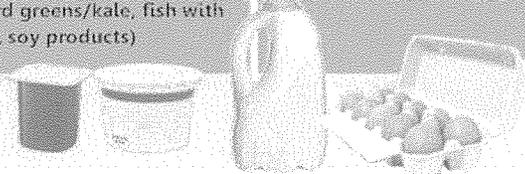
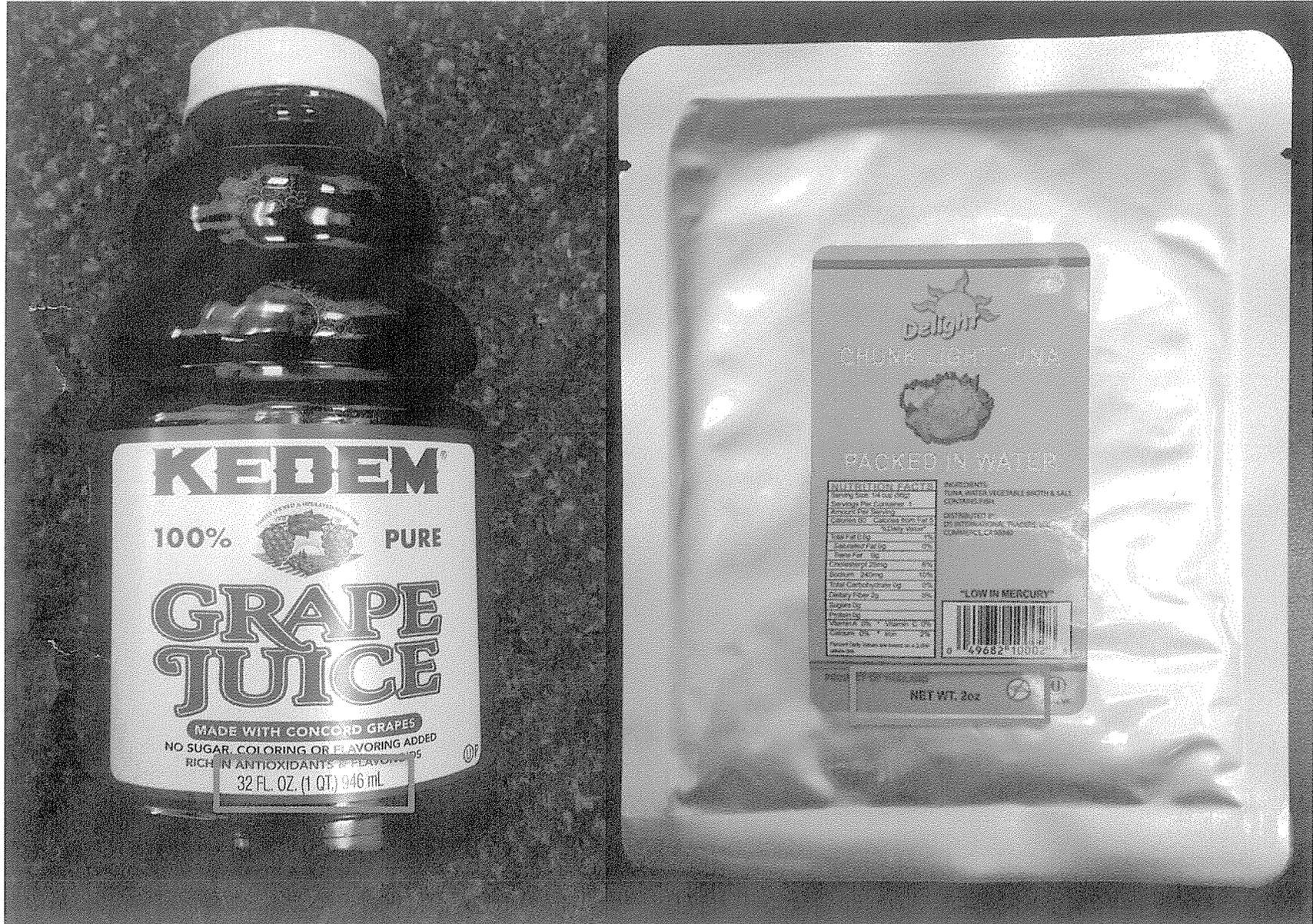


Exhibit C:



## Exhibit D:

# EFAP FY'15 CYCLE I (JULY – DECEMBER 2014) FOOD LIST

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

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

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

# Exhibit E

USDA FOODS AVAILABLE FOR 2016\*  
THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

WBCSM			WBCSM		
Material #	WBCSM Material Master Name	Pack Size	Material #	WBCSM Material Master Name	Pack Size
<i>GROUP (A)</i>					
100367	BEANS BLACKEYE, LOW SODIUM CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	100207	APPLESAUCE UNSWEETENED CAN 24/300	24/15.5 oz cans
100306	BEANS GREEN LOW-SODIUM CAN 24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	110361	APPLESAUCE CUP UNSWEETENED 96/4.5	96/4.5 oz cups
100372	BEANS LIGHT RED KIDNEY LOW SODIUM CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	110470	APPLE SLICES FRZ CTN-12/2.5 LB	12/2.5 lb ctns
100361	BEANS REFRIED LOW SODIUM CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	100210	APRICOT HALVES EXTRA LIGHT SYRUP CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans
100363	BEANS VEGETARIAN LOW SODIUM CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	100211	MIXED FRUIT EXTRA LIGHT SYRUP CAN -24/300	24/15.5 oz cans
100308	CARROTS LOW SODIUM CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	100218	PEACHES CLING SLICES EXTRA LIGHT SYRUP CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans
100310	CORN CREAM LOW SODIUM CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	100223	PEARS EXTRA LIGHT SYRUP CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans
100311	CORN KERNEL NO SALT ADDED CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	100291	PLUMS PITTED DRIED CTN 25 LB	25 lb cartons
100314	PEAS LOW SODIUM CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	100290	PLUMS PITTED DRIED PKG-24/1 LB	24/1 lb packages
100337	POTATOES DEHYDRATED FLKS PKG-12/1 LB	12/1 lb packages	100293	RAISINS BOX-144/1.33 OZ	144/1.3 oz boxes
100331	POTATOES WHT SLICES LOW SODIUM CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	100295	RAISINS PKG-24/15 OZ	24/15 oz packages
100319	PUMPKIN NO SALT ADDED CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	110556	RAISINS BAG-6/5 LB	6/5 lb packages
110163	SOUP CRM OF CHICKEN RDU SOD CTN-12/22 OZ	12/22 oz ctn			
110164	SOUP CRM OF MUSHRM RDU SOD CTN -12/22 OZ	12/22 oz ctn	100127	BEEF CAN-24/24 OZ	24/24 oz cans
100322	SOUP TOMATO CONDENSED LOW SODIUM CAN-24/1	24/10.5 oz cans	100159	BEEF FINE GROUND FRZ PKG-40/1 LB	40/1 lb packages
100321	SOUP VEGETABLE CONDENSED LOW SODIUM CAN-24/1	24/10.5 oz cans	110260	BEEF FINE GROUND LFT OPT FRZ PKG-40/1 LB	40/1 lb packages
100335	SPAGHETTI SAUCE MEATLESS LOW SODIUM CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	100526	BEEF STEW CHUNKY CAN-24/24 OZ	24/24 oz cans
100323	SPINACH LOW SODIUM CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	110390	CATFISH FLTS UNBRD RAW PKG-20/2	20/2 lb packages
100328	TOMATO DICED NO SALT ADDED CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	110478	CHICKEN BONED CAN-24/15 OZ	24/15 oz cans
100333	TOMATO SAUCE LOW SODIUM CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	100880	CHICKEN WHOLE BAGGED FRZ CTN-36-43 LB	approx 3-4 lbs each
110610	K H TOMATO SAUCE CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	100139	PORK CAN-24/24 OZ	24/24 oz cans
100320	VEG MIX LOW SODIUM CAN-24/300	24/15.5 oz cans	100182	PORK HAM WATERAD FRZ CTN-12/3 LB	12/3 lb cartons
			110580	K SALMON PINK CAN-24/14.75 OZ	24/14.75 oz cans
101017	POTATOES RUSSET FRESH BAG-10/5 LB	10/5 lb bags	110563	SALMON PINK CAN-24/14.75 OZ	24/14.57 oz cans
101019	POTATOES ROUND WHITE FRESH BAG-10/5 LB	10/5 lb bags	100125	TURKEY ROASTS FRZ CTN-32-48 LB	32-48 lb cartons
110560	PEARS FRESH PKG-12/3 LB	12/3 lb bags	100194	TUNA CHUNK LIGHT CAN-24/12 OZ	24/12 oz cans
110561	APPLES FRESH PKG-12/3 LB	12/3 lb bags			
			100044	EGG MIX DRIED PKG-48/6 OZ	48/6 oz packages
100893	APPLE JUICE UNSWEETENED PLST BTL-8/64 FL OZ	8/64 oz plas btl	100936	EGGS 15 DOZEN SHELL	15 dozen
100894	CHERRYAPPLE JUICE UNSWEETENED PLST BTL-8/64 FL OZ	8/64 oz plas btl			
100899	CRANAPPLE JUICE UNSWEETENED PLST BTL 8/64 FL OZ	8/64 oz plas btl	100378	BEANS BABY LIMA DRY PKG-12/2 LB	12/2 lb packages
100895	GRAPE CONCORD JUICE UNSWEETENED PLST BTL-8/64 FL OZ	8/64 oz plas btl	100374	BEANS BLACKEYE DRY PKG-12/2 LB	12/2 lb packages
100896	GRAPEFRUIT JUICE UNSWEETENED PLST BTL-8/64 FL OZ	8/64 oz plas btl	101020	BEANS DRY GARBANZO PKG-12/2 LB	12/2 lb packages
100897	ORANGE JUICE UNSWEETENED PLST BTL-8/64 FL OZ	8/64 oz plas btl	100380	BEANS GREAT NORTHERN DRY PKG-12/2 LB	12/2 lb packages
100898	TOMATO JUICE UNSWEETENED PLST BTL-8/64 FL OZ	8/64 oz plas btl	100385	BEANS LIGHT RED KIDNEY DRY PKG-12/2 LB	12/2 lb packages
			100382	BEANS PINTO DRY PKG -12/2 LB	12/2 lb packages
			100388	LENTILS DRY PKG -12/2 LB	12/2 lb packages

**WBSCM**

**Material # WBSCM Material Master Name**

**Pack Size**

**WBSCM**

**Material #**

**WBSCM Material Master Name**

**Pack Size**

*GROUP (B)*

100918	BAKERY FLOUR MIX LOWFAT BAG-6/5 LB	6/5 lb bags
100035	CHEESE BLEND AMER SKM LVS-12/2 LB	12/2 lb packages
100433	EGGNOODLE 1/2 INCH WIDE PKG-12/1 LB	12/1 lb packages
100470	GRITS CORN WHITE BAG-8/5 LB	8/5 lb bags
100469	GRITS FINE YELLOW BAG-8/5 LB	8/5 lb bags
100050	MILK 1% MILKFAT UHT 1500 BOX-12/32 FL OZ	12/32 oz
100875	MILK 1% MILKFAT UHT 2640 BOX-27/8 FL OZ	27/8 oz box
100466	OATS ROLLED WHOLE GRAIN -12/3LB	12/3 lb packages
100441	OIL VEGETABLE BTL-9/48 OZ	9/48 oz bottles
110511	PASTA MACARONI PLAIN ELBOW BOX-20/1 LB	24/1 lb boxes
110450	PASTA SPAGHETTI BOX-20/1 LB	20/1 lb boxes
100435	PASTA WHOLE GRAIN ROTINI PKG-20/1 LB	20/1 lb packages
101023	PASTA WHOLE GRAIN MACARONI PKG 24/1 LB	24/1 lb packages
101035	PASTA WHOLE GRAIN SPAGHETTI PKG-12/2 LB	24/2 lb packages
100395	PEANUT BUTTER SMOOTH JAR-12/18 OZ	12/18 oz jars
110660	K PEANUT BUTTER SMOOTH JAR-12/18 OZ	12/18 oz jars
100391	PEANUTS ROASTED REGULAR UNSALTED PKG-12/16 OZ	12/16 oz packages
100491	RICE US#2 LONG GRAIN PKG-24/2 LB	24/2 lb packages
100492	RICE US#2 LONG GRAIN PKG-30/2 LB	30/2 lb packages
100487	RICE US#2 MEDIUM GRAIN PKG-24/2 LB	24/2 lb packages
100488	RICE US#2 MEDIUM GRAIN PKG-30/2 LB	30/2 lb packages
100500	RICE BRN US#1 LONG PARBOILED PKG-24/ 2LB	24/2 lb packages
100501	RICE BRN US#1 LONG PARBOILED PKG 30/2 LB	30/2 lb packages

**Ready-To Eat Cereals:**

100449	CEREAL CORN FLKS 1080 PKG-12/18 OZ	12/18 oz packages
100929	CEREAL OAT CIRCLES 1344 PKG-12/14 OZ	12/14 oz packages
110265	CEREAL CORN RICE BISC 1080 PKG-14/12 OZ	14/12 oz packages
100457	CEREAL RICE CRISP 1008 PKG-16/12 OZ	16/12 oz packages
100933	CEREAL WHEAT BRAN FLKS 1344 PKG-14/17.3OZ	14/17.3 oz packages
100446	CEREAL CORN SQUARES 1344 PKG-14/14 OZ	14/14 oz packages
110371	CEREAL WHEAT SHREDDED 1440 PKG-16/16.5 OZ	16/16.5 oz packages
110372	CEREAL WHEAT SHREDDED 1080 PKG-16/18 OZ	16/18 oz packages
110373	CEREAL WHEAT SHREDDED 2016 PKG-12/16.4OZ	12/16.4 oz packages
110374	CEREAL WHEAT SHREDDED 2160 PKG-10/16.4 OZ	10/16.4 oz packages

*\*Purchases are subject to market conditions. This list does not include bonus commodities*

City Council Hearing on Hunger in New York City

January 13, 2016

Submitted by Anthony Butler

Executive Director, St John's Bread and Life Program

795 Lexington Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

[abutler@breadandlife.org](mailto:abutler@breadandlife.org)

Allow me to thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am always edified at, particularly for such a large and complex city, the open participatory nature of the City Council.

By now you have or will hear the statistics about hunger in the city, the 1 in 6 who use emergency food providers, the 1 in 4 children who cannot get enough to eat, the 1,800,000 New Yorkers who rely on SNAP and emergency food providers. You may be aware that the poor in Costa Rica have a longer life expectancy than the poor in this richest city in the world. There is such significant data on the future learning, developmental and social deficits that will develop in those who in their toddler years are unable to receive proper nutrition. These are deficits that are both costly to society and can never be corrected.

You have heard that because of SNAP cuts there is a monthly meal loss of 5.3 million meals. You will hear many stories of how food pantries repeatedly run out of food. You have heard of the increase demand that 90% of the city's food pantries have faced this year.

As the Executive Director of St John's Bread and Life these problems are faced daily: Distributing over a million meals last year. Having to raise 90% of our funding privately because of the dearth of public funding. Creating jobs in the community to reduce the need for emergency food. Teaching nutrition cooking to help families eat better. Providing medical services, frequently to the undocumented and uninsured. Providing immigration services to 1,000's per year to help them get a leg up in entering the mainstream culture. Helping our guests procure useful and government approved Identification that they may navigate our city and not be blocked from opportunities. Hosting a free tax program that helps thousands and brings over \$3,000,000 into the economy.

What you may not be aware of is Angelo, working full time at the airport, two kids ready to enter school, and his wife working part time. Yet still she comes to our food pantry weekly because Angelo does not make enough money to both feed and house his family. There is Kamisha, a single mother of two children, attending a community college and working part time. She is living in a shelter and needs our food pantry to help feed her children and herself. They are some of the silent voices in this second city of ours. They are part of this 1.8 million who rely on emergency food providers to survive. They are not the several thousand visible homeless who attract the attention of city government because they annoy

and inconvenience those with means. They are not the untreated mentally ill person who through the failure of a heavily, though inadequately funded safety net, becomes a nuisance in the community. They are not the violent drug dealer who holds a community hostage. They are the backbone of our communities and city. They are the people who work and provide our services, feed us, keep our children safe, and keep our city clean. Yet they are assisted, according to the Food Bank of the City of New York, by less than 1% of the city's budget to help them eat.

I ask you to end both this scandal of hunger and this inequality in funding to relieve it. I ask you to raise this funding above its subsistence level. We must not simply answer societies problem in a reactionary way, serving only those who yell the loudest or inconvenience us but rather remember that all those in our great city need and demand a just and fair world. Particularly as it relates to basic societal needs of food, shelter and work. We must never do for others what they can do for themselves but we who have and control much must remember that we must do for those who cannot and are frequently not permitted to do for themselves.

I thank all present for this time to speak and encourage you in your work as officials chosen by us to work to build a just <sup>and</sup> fair city.



**Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare  
Hearing on Hunger in New York City, January 13, 2016**

**Liz Accles, Executive Director, Community Food Advocates**

Chairman Levin and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The Lunch 4 Learning Campaign and Community Food Advocates thank the City Council, Mayor de Blasio, Chancellor Fariña, and Public Advocate James for instituting universal free school lunch in middle schools in the 2014 school year and permanently funding it in June 2015. It is a very important first step but now is the time to finish the job and bring universal free school lunch to all New York City public school students.

Universal free school lunch was one of Mayor de Blasio's campaign promises. He said it brings more federal dollars into New York City and that eliminating to programs stigma is "crucial".

Universal free school lunch has the potential to be one of the most far reaching anti-hunger initiative for families with school aged children.

With little publicity, the evidence is clear that universal free school lunch has an immediate and direct positive impact on middle school student participation. Expansion to all students in the next school year should be a priority. We call on the City Council to continue fighting for this as a top priority issue.

We know that universal free school lunch is a success. I will briefly mention our findings, but of equal importance I am here to share our analysis of the benefits and costs of expanding universal free school lunch to all students through the federal Community Eligibility Provision.

First year finding:

1 - Comparing middle school student lunch participation from September 2014–June 2015, when the Department of Education instituted Universal Free School Lunch in stand-alone middle schools, to the same time the previous year (2013-14):

Middle school student participation in the school lunch program increased by 7,300 additional students eating each school day over the prior year.

*During this same period, elementary and high school lunch participation remained flat or declined, strongly suggesting that increased participation in 2014-15 for middle school students is directly related to the implementation of universal free school lunch.*

2 – From September 2014–June 2015 most, but not all middle school students were in schools with UFSL. Analysis of student lunch participation of middle school students based on whether they have universal free school lunch in their schools, found:

- In Middle Schools that do not offer free lunch to all students, participation was 43.5% of students eating lunch on a daily basis;
- participation in new universal middle schools was 64% (starting in September 2014 under the federal Community Eligibility Provision, CEP);
- and participation in middle schools with an ongoing universal meals program was 70.1% (Provision 2). This demonstrates that the longer students experience school lunch without the poverty stigma, the higher the participation.



**Benefits of Expanding Universal Free School Lunch to High School and Elementary Schools Under Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)**

***First Year Projections***

**Benefit #1:**      **More students eating lunch each school day**

- Projected increase of 47,000 additional elementary and high school students eating lunch each school day (47,000 students x 180 days = 8,460,000 additional meals per year)

**Benefit #2:**      **Significant financial relief to families throughout NYC**

- \$900 in annual financial relief to families per child\*
- Total of \$42.3 million in financial relief to families

**Benefit #3:**      **Increased reimbursements for NYC**

- City would receive \$22.6 million in additional federal and state reimbursements (8,460,000 additional meals x \$2.68 per meal reimbursement = \$22.6 m)

**Benefit #4:**      **More jobs created**

- Increased school lunch participation would create 376 new jobs (1 worker per 125 meals per day: 47,000/125 = 376 additional workers)

**Cost to NYC:**      **An additional \$3.6 million per year**

- Total cost for additional lunches = \$26.2 million (8,460,000 x \$3.10 cost per meal)
- Less total federal & state reimbursement for additional lunches - \$22.6 million
- = Gap to be filled by NYC (\$3.6 million)

*See analysis on next page: Participation and cost projections based on actual first year middle school student Community Eligibility Participation.*

*\*((\$5 average value per meal) Based on the Robin Hood Foundation estimates for cost per meal for a substantial main meal for low income consumers. Explanation: Their \$5 estimated value of a meal is based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimate for the average cost of food for low-income consumers, and is increased to reflect the cost of living in New York City using the method found in the Self-Sufficiency Standard for the City of New York 2004 (Pearce, 2004).*

Analysis: Participation and Cost Projections are based on actual first year middle school student CEP participation.

**First year Middle School Universal Free Lunch Implementation (CEP Schools Only 2014-15 school year)**

5,500<sup>1</sup> additional students eating lunch daily or 990,000 additional meals served (+7.5% over prior year)

- (a) Total additional cost for food and labor for additional lunches served @ \$3.10/meal<sup>2</sup> = \$3.08 million
- (b) Total new federal and state revenue (reimbursement) to NYC under CEP for additional lunches served @ \$2.68 average reimbursement/ for each meal<sup>3</sup> = \$2.66 million
- (c) Gap between federal and state reimbursements and cost of providing the meals = Additional cost to New York City = \$0.42 million**
- (d) Additional jobs created = 44  
(125 meals = 1 staff person: 5,500/125 = 44)

**Tailored Projections for Elementary and High Schools: First Year CEP Implementation**

Projected Elementary Schools participation level: 30,000 additional children eating lunch each day (8.6% increase in participation) would reflect 80% of attending children.<sup>4</sup>

Projected High School participation level: 17,000 additional students eating lunch each day (19.9% increase in participation) would reflect 42.7% of attending students.

Total projected daily increase in student participation 47,000 students, or 8,460,000 additional lunches served per year.

- (a) Total additional cost for food and labor for additional lunches served @\$3.10/meal (see fn 2) = \$26.2 million
- (b) Total new federal and state revenue (reimbursement) to NYC under CEP for additional lunches served @2.68/ average reimbursement for each meal (see fn 3) = \$22.6 million
- (c) Gap between federal and state reimbursements and cost of providing the meals = Additional cost to New York City = \$3.6 million**
- (c) Additional jobs created = 376  
(125 meals = 1 staff person: 47,000/125 = 376)

<sup>1</sup> In 2014-15 school year there was an average increase of 7,300 additional middle school students eating lunch every day, including 5,500 students in CEP participating schools

<sup>2</sup> Cost per lunch from NYC Office of SchoolFood, Oct. 2015

<sup>3</sup> Average lunch reimbursement. Data from NYC Office of SchoolFood, Oct. 2015

<sup>4</sup> Projected elementary school participation assumes expansion of USL to all grades and a significant publicity effort



## **TITLE I AND UNIVERSAL FREE SCHOOL LUNCH: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Question: Are Universal Free School Lunch and Title I both funded through the U.S. Department of Education?**

**Answer:** No. School Food and Title I are administered by two different federal agencies and are tied to two separate funding streams. Title I funds are federal education funds provided to NYC by the U.S. Department of Education; the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides NYC with school lunch reimbursement funds.

**Question: Does information gathered from school lunch forms determine the amount of federal Title I funding that New York City receives?**

**Answer:** No. NYC receives a set amount of Title I funding under formulas developed by the Federal government. This amount is determined based on census data regarding the number of children living in poverty in the school district – *not* information gathered from school meal application forms.

**Question: Why do I keep hearing that school lunch forms impact my school's Title I funds?**

**Answer:** Once the City receives federal Title I funds from the U.S. Department of Education it must use a measure of poverty to decide how to distribute those Title I funds among schools. At present, NYC gathers that data from school meals application forms. In middle schools with universal free school lunch under the federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP household income is collected through alternative income forms.

**Question: What is the connection between Universal Free School Lunch and Title I data collection as it is currently structured?**

**Answer:** Universal Free School Lunch under the federal CEP bars the use of school lunch forms in an effort to reduce paperwork and eliminate the income-based stigma of the traditional school lunch program. For Title I distribution purposes there are several alternate options to measure family income and poverty rates. In January 2014, the federal Department of Education provided guidance to school districts informing them that they may identify schools' Title I eligibility through the following methods: direct certification (computer matches that identify the number of families receiving public benefits, etc.), Census poverty estimates, state or local income surveys, or

alternative income forms. NYC decided to use an alternative income form that contains much of the same information as the traditional school lunch form in CEP middle schools.

**Question: Which cities are providing Universal Free School Lunch and how are they measuring income for Title I distribution purposes?**

**Answer:** Many other cities have implemented universal using CEP and have used the above mentioned methods to measure student poverty rates for Title I allocation purposes in absence of school lunch forms.

They include: Chicago, IL; Boston, MA; Philadelphia, PA; Baltimore, MD; Dallas, TX; Detroit, MI; Milwaukee, WI; Pittsburgh, PA; Birmingham, Ala; Mobile, AL; Montgomery, AL, Jackson, MS; Kansas City, MO; Springfield, MA; Akron, OH; Dayton, OH; District of Columbia; Nashville, TN; Buffalo, NY; Hempstead, NY; Poughkeepsie, NY; Rochester, NY; Syracuse, NY.

**Question: Universal was instituted in NYC's stand-alone (6-8<sup>th</sup> grade) middle schools in the 2014-2015 school year. Has there been an impact on Title I funding in middle schools?**

**Answer:** There has been no reported impact on Title I allocations.

Last year, stand-alone middle schools used an alternative income form that is similar to the traditional school lunch form to collect family income information. Forms were returned at similar rates as in previous years.

## **Testimony at Council General Welfare Committee Hearing on Hunger in New York City**

*13 January 2016*

Good Morning. My name is Ashley Rafalow and with my colleague Nicholas Freudenberg, we are pleased to present testimony on hunger in New York City on behalf of the New York City Food Policy Center at Hunter College, funded in part by the NYC Council and the City University of New York School of Public Health.

In our testimony today, we suggest two ways for the New York City Human Resources Administration 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 City University of New York's 275,000 degree students and their families. Both of these recommendations emerge from our ongoing work at the City University of New York School of Public Health and the Food Policy Center.

First, as you know, New York City is home to an estimated 500,000 undocumented immigrants and many of these 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 researchers, we know that high rates of food insecurity among immigrants contribute to a variety of health problems, including rising rates of obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. Paradoxically, these conditions affect the under-nourished who are forced to spend limited food resources on energy dense but nutrient poor foods. For US citizens, food 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 and diet-related diseases. For immigrants however, legal barriers, organizational practices of food programs, 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 US and national origin.

How can New York City and the Human Resources Administration promote food security for its immigrant residents? We suggest two strategies:

1. Conduct a comprehensive review to identify food benefits that are available to various categories of immigrants and promote these options in immigrant communities through 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 breakfast, lunch 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 available form of food assistance in immigrant communities.
2. Consider 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 of food insecurity and hunger. It would also advance New York City's commitment to the inclusion of all residents in the life of the city and to making meeting basic food needs a human right. By considering the economic, health and moral costs and benefits of such an approach, New York City could set a standard for other jurisdictions around the country.

Second, we want to talk about our own community, the 275,000 degree students enrolled at City University of New York. In 2010, we surveyed a representative sample of CUNY undergraduates to

assess levels of food insecurity. As we have previously described in testimony to the City Council, what we found shocked us. Two in five (39.2%) CUNY students in the sample reported that they experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months suggesting that at that time almost 100,000 CUNY students experienced some level of food insecurity in the last year. Using standard definitions, food insecurity was defined as reporting two or more of the following conditions occurring often or sometimes in the last year: worrying that you would not have enough money for food; cutting or skipping a meal because you did not have enough money to buy food; unable to eat balanced or nutritious meals because of a lack of money; or going hungry because of a lack of money. Almost a quarter of CUNY students (22.7%) reported that they often or sometimes went hungry in the last year because of lack of money.

Since that time the issue of food insecurity and hunger among college students, especially low income students has become a national issue, attracting media attention and a report from HUD. A recent national survey found that of those young people attending school and reporting food insecurity, nearly one-third report that they've had to choose between paying for food and covering educational expenses at some point in the last year.

CUNY has taken several steps to address the needs we identified including the expansion of Single Stop programs to all of CUNY's community colleges and two senior colleges. Single Stop enrolls CUNY students in multiple public benefit programs including SNAP, thus helping more students obtain the benefits to which they are eligible. In addition CUNY has established food pantries or other food assistance program on several campuses, often in partnership with the New York City Foodbank.

This fall we completed another survey of a representative sample of CUNY undergraduates. We'll have the results ready to release in a month or so but our preliminary analyses suggest that the most serious form of food insecurity has decreased since 2010 with the proportion reporting that they often or sometimes go hungry because of lack of money falling from about 23% to about 15%. If our final analysis confirms this drop that's good progress. But it is still shameful that in the richest city in the world, more than 40,000 of our students still report some form of hunger. CUNY students are New York City's success stories; a college degree will provide them with lifetime health and economic benefits. But hungry students have trouble focusing on their schoolwork and are more likely to drop out to earn money to support themselves and their families. 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 are entitled
- Further expand the Single Stop program to provide all CUNY campuses with access to help in getting the benefits that can help them complete school and prosper
- Explore new approaches to making healthy affordable food more available on CUNY campuses

The CUNY School of Public Health and our Food Policy Center invite other organizations to join us in making hunger history at CUNY. Together we can realize the vision of a New York City without hunger and without rising rates of diet-related diseases.

*Nicholas Freudenberg is Distinguished Professor of Public Health at the City University of New York School of Public Health and the founder of CUNY's New York City Food Policy Center. Ashley Rafalow is Director of Operations and Communications at the Food Policy Center. For more information, contact Nicholas Freudenberg at [nfreuden@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:nfreuden@hunter.cuny.edu).*



January 13, 2016

Councilman Stephen Levin  
Chairman, Committee on General Welfare  
New York City Council

Re: Hunger Hearing in New York City – Single Stop Comments

Dear Chairman Levin,

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

### **Hunger in New York City**

New York City is facing a growing crisis of poverty, inequality, and associated hunger. By 2013, some 45.1 percent of New Yorkers lived in households with incomes no more than 1.5 times greater than the city's official poverty threshold, or \$38,787 for a household with one adult and two children.<sup>1</sup> If those 3.7 million people came together, they would form the city's most populous borough—a borough with more people than the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island combined.<sup>2</sup>

This poverty translates directly to hunger and food insecurity. According to the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, between 2012 and 2014, over 1.4 million New Yorkers—including nearly one in four of the city's children—lived in households that lacked sufficient food. Year after year, New York City Emergency food providers report a continued increase in need for their services.<sup>3</sup> These providers are facing so much demand in fact, that many are forced to turn people away.

To help make ends meet, low-income households often turn to government resources and local services. Consequently, the number of New Yorkers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a main source of food aid, rose to 1.8 million from 1.3 million—or 36.2 percent—from late 2008 to 2013.<sup>4</sup> By one count, this program alone lowered the number of New

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<sup>1</sup> New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (2013). *The CEO Poverty Measure, 2005-2013*.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> New York City Coalition Against Hunger (2014). *Hunger in New York City*.

<sup>4</sup> New York City Department of Social Services (2013). *HRA/DSS Fact Sheet: December 2013*.

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Yorkers who would have been poor in 2013 by 296,000 persons.<sup>5</sup> However, trends shifted in 2013 and 2014.

The NYC SNAP participation rate declined from 2013 to 2014 (1.9 million to 1.78 million). In that same time period, the NYC unemployment rate declined (8.8% to 6.8%). Many attribute improving economic conditions to the decline in benefit participation. However, the number of people in NYC homeless shelters in October 2014 was 56,000—a record high. In this same time period, soup kitchens and pantries remained at capacity.<sup>6</sup>

Experts have hypothesized that there is more to this seemingly contradictory story—it is likely that more people are working so they no longer qualify for food stamps. Unfortunately, however, much of the job expansion has primarily been among part-time and/or low paying jobs. In other words, families are caught in between a “rock and a hard place,” earning too much to qualify for benefits, but not making enough money to feed their families adequately.<sup>7</sup>

### **Hunger among College Students**

Today, three-quarters of college students are considered “non-traditional.”<sup>8</sup> Students of today tend to be older, financially independent, have their own families to care for, and are usually forced to work at least one job in order to make ends meet, all while attempting to invest in their education and future. More and more colleges are reporting that their students struggle with balancing their varied obligations, in addition to having enough money to eat three times a day.<sup>9</sup> According to a recent scholarly study, college students are subject to a high number of potential risk factors for food insecurity and hunger. College students face increased tuition and housing costs, and the need to work at least part-time to make ends meet while receiving low wages that do not cover the actual cost of living.<sup>10</sup>

While evidence is mounting, it is hard to know just how many undergraduates struggle with food insecurity. National education surveys, such as those administered by the National Center for Education Statistics, do not include questions on food insecurity. The best available evidence on college student food insecurity comes from independent researchers, whom increasingly are turning their attention to this important matter. In December 2015, the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, in collaboration with the Healthy Minds Study, the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), and Single Stop released a new research report that assesses food and housing insecurity among community college students utilizing a national sample of more than 4,000 students at 10 community colleges. According to the report, half of

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<sup>5</sup> South by North Strategies, Ltd. (2015). Analysis of New York City Center for Economic Opportunity, *The CEO Poverty Measure*, 20 and 56.

<sup>6</sup> Politico New York (2014). [Advocates: Drop in food stamps about more than job growth.](#)

<sup>7</sup> Politico New York (2014). [Advocates: Drop in food stamps about more than job growth.](#)

<sup>8</sup> Wisconsin Hope Lab (2015). [Public Testimony on Hunger in Higher Education Submitted to the National Commission on Hunger.](#)

<sup>9</sup> The Washington Post (2014). [More College Students Battle Hunger as Education and Living Costs Rise.](#)

<sup>10</sup> Gaines et al. (2014). [Predicting the role of financial factors, resources and skills in predicting food security status among college students.](#)

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all community college students are struggling with food and/or housing insecurity; fully 20 percent are hungry.<sup>11</sup> Evidence of college student food insecurity has also been documented in New York City. One of the most comprehensive studies of food and housing insecurity among college students, a report from the City University of New York found that 39.2 percent of its students experienced food insecurity in the previous twelve months.<sup>12</sup>

High rates of food insecurity have far reaching implications for college students in terms of their more immediate academic success and long-term physical and financial health. Several studies show an inverse relationship between food insecurity and academic achievement. For example, a study using data from two community colleges in Maryland found that 56% of students in the sample were food insecure and food insecure students were 22% less likely to report a 3.5-4.0 GPA rather than a 2.0-2.49 GPA.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, food insecurity negatively impacts mental and social health, dietary choices and overall health status among adolescents and young adults.<sup>14</sup>

One of the most important programs to curtail hunger in the United States is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which exists as a safety net program for millions of needy individuals. A study by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found that household food insecurity decreased nearly 10 percent after six months of SNAP benefit receipt.<sup>15</sup> These results show that SNAP has the great potential to minimize the risk of students facing undue hardship. However, the federal government has put restrictions on SNAP eligibility that prevent many college students from receiving SNAP benefits. Students 18-49 who attend school half-time or more are ineligible for benefits unless they meet an exemption. Additionally, students under the age of 22 living with their parents must be part of their family's SNAP household, even if they meet the student eligibility rules, and even if they purchase and prepare food separately.<sup>16</sup>

Our Single Stop sites at CUNYs report that the complicated student eligibility rules for SNAP result in many students mistakenly believing that students can never get SNAP, and lack of understanding of complicated rules is another barrier that prevents many low-income college students from accessing benefits. Single Stop caseworkers are skilled in helping eligible low-income students apply for and secure benefits, however, students attempting to apply without the aid of a caseworker may prove unsuccessful. Therefore, we believe that SNAP eligibility outreach efforts be enhanced to help students understand their unique circumstances and corresponding SNAP eligibility.

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<sup>11</sup> Wisconsin Hope Lab (2015). [Hungry to Learn: Addressing food & housing insecurity among undergraduates.](#)

<sup>12</sup> Freudenberg, N., et al. (2011). [Food Insecurity at CUNY: Results from a survey of CUNY undergraduate students.](#)

<sup>13</sup> Maroto, M.E., Snelling, A., & Linck, H. (2015). Food insecurity among community college students: prevalence and association with grade point average. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 39(6).

<sup>14</sup> Murphy, JM, Wehler, CA, Pagano, ME, Little, M, Kleinman, RE, & Jellinek, MS (1998). Relationship Between Hunger and Psychosocial Functioning in Low-Income American Children. *Journal of American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 37(2): 163-170.

<sup>15</sup> Feeding America. (August 18, 2014). [More Than 46 Million People Turn to the Feeding America Food Bank Network to Make Ends Meet.](#)

<sup>16</sup> CLASP (2014). [SNAP Policy Brief: College Student Eligibility.](#)

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To attempt to address the issue of student hunger, colleges themselves have worked to develop creative student support programs. Kingsborough Community College (KCC) and Hostos Community College (HCC) in partnership with the Food Bank for New York City, applied for campus food pantries through their Single Stop sites, and piloted pantry services made available to all students. At KCC, students can visit the pantry once weekly and take enough for three days of meals. In 2013, this amounted to over 21,000 visits to the campus food pantry, highlighting the need for this service.

Food pantries are an important presence on campuses because of rules in place preventing many students from being deemed eligible for SNAP benefits, and because for those that are fortunate enough to meet SNAP eligibility requirements, many find they do not receive enough assistance to cover food expenses throughout the entirety of the month. We will not solve the problem of hunger overnight, but food pantries have the potential to give low-income college students immediate relief from food insecurity during the day.

We know that many other schools are interested in developing campus pantries, but despite low startup costs, have difficulty establishing a consistent funding stream. The ultimate cost of supporting a campus food pantry will depend on how each school structures their program. However, a conservative estimate for providing 100 students with enough food to share with one other person in their household for 12 months would cost just over \$14,000.<sup>ii</sup>

The premise of campus pantries, and other student support services, is that students who are more financially stable and have access to support services are more apt to persist in and to complete a course of study. And ensuring that students complete their course of study is a good investment. Even after factoring in the costs that graduates incur when earning the degree, the median earnings of associate's degree holders during their careers is about \$259,000 more than for high school graduates.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Single Stop Model**

Single Stop is a national nonprofit organization that harnesses America's most effective anti-poverty tools to create economic mobility for low-income families and individuals. Our "one-stop shop" model is designed to help low-income families and individuals reach financial stability and lift them out of poverty by providing them access to the full spectrum of resources available to them, including free tax preparation, legal services, financial counseling, and public benefits counseling and application assistance, all at once. We partner with community-based organizations and colleges to operate 65 sites in all five boroughs through which we served over 1 million low-income households<sup>iii</sup> since 2007. Seven<sup>iv</sup> of those sites are located at the city's largest food pantries.

Single Stop is proud to be the city's largest single network of Paperless Office System sites that allow eligible people to apply for SNAP directly from Single Stop locations. In 2015 alone, Single Stop estimates that we have helped over 20,000 New York City households enroll in SNAP. Single Stop also connects

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<sup>17</sup> American Institutes for Research (2013). What's the Value of an Associate's Degree? The Return on Investment for Graduates and Taxpayers.



people with other food assistance programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and school meals.

As you know, food pantries do a tremendous job providing for thousands of hungry New Yorkers each day, and food pantries on college campuses are an important targeted extension of this emergency support, but the bottom line is that there are a host of other issues that need to be addressed to complement benefits like SNAP and services like food pantries. To begin with, low-income individuals and families must be given the opportunity to access all of the benefits and services that exist to help them.

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

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

The premise of the Single Stop model is straightforward: accessed individually, these resources can serve as “Band-Aids”, but accessed in concert, they can begin to address the underlying causes of intergenerational poverty, inoculate against future setbacks that might otherwise be catastrophic - a sick child, car trouble, temporary job loss - and constitute a bridge towards self-sufficiency and economic mobility.

While many are aware of Single Stop and its individual community partners, they often overlook the impact of the entire network and its potential to connect low-income New Yorkers to economic opportunity in even greater numbers. In many ways, the Single Stop network has just begun to tap its potential in a city where almost half of all residents live in low-income households.

### *Single Stop on Community College Campuses*

In 2009, Single Stop launched the Community College Initiative to increase completion rates of low-income community college students by addressing financial barriers facing students. Single Stop college sites enable students to tap into existing unspent federal and local resources that can be used as a supplemental form of financial aid, thereby hopefully preventing students from being forced to choose between a degree and basic necessities such as buying groceries. Currently, we have sites at community colleges in 9 states (NY, NJ, CA, MA, LA, PA, MS, FL, and NC), including all the community colleges in the CUNY system. Last year Single Stop introduced our model at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, our first site serving students at a four-year institution. Since the inception of the initiative, Single Stop has served over 72,000 families and individuals at CUNY sites, connecting them to \$173,055,355 in

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additional resources—tax credits, health insurance, nutrition assistance, and more—that students are using to support themselves as they pursue a postsecondary degree. In that time period, there were 4,588 approved SNAP applications from CUNY sites connecting these individuals and families to \$12,670,026 in SNAP benefits. Nationally, we have reached over 178,000 students and families at college sites through the Community College Initiative.

Currently, only twenty-nine percent of students seeking associate degrees at community colleges obtain one within three years. By providing Single Stop services to students and households of students in need, the percentage of students who stay on through completion can be dramatically increased. By partnering with colleges and integrating Single Stop with student service centers and financial aid departments, Single Stop seeks to harness two of the country's most effective anti-poverty tools: coordinated access to America's safety net and post-secondary education. Single Stop's Community College Initiative breaks the cycle of intergenerational poverty in two ways: first, in the short term, by providing students and their families with access to critical benefits and services proven to alleviate poverty, and in the long run, by helping students stay in school through completion and thus increasing labor mobility and lifetime earnings.

Through our work at college sites, we find that few people associate students with hunger, despite growing evidence of food insecurity on college campuses. However, to reemphasize the lived experience of poverty on college campuses and the importance of student support services, please consider Ben's story.

One of our clients, referred to as Ben throughout, is a single father caring for his young daughter, referred to as Maria throughout. Ben is attending a nursing program at Kingsborough Community College (KCC). Despite the intense demands of the program, Ben is determined to secure an education that will give his daughter a chance at a bright future. But, Ben lost his job, fell behind on rent, and was facing eviction. Ben is not an anomaly—there are thousands of stories like Ben's.

And what is the most probable end for a story like Ben's? Should Ben attempt to work full-time while attending school, he may become overwhelmed with all of the obligations he is being forced to juggle. As a result, Ben is likely to drop out of college. And that would be a tragedy—not just for Ben and his daughter, but for all of us concerned with the future of our country.

Fortunately, Ben was connected to a Single Stop office on campus. Hattie, our site lead who worked with him, said Ben had a lot of pride, but she could tell that despite his burdens he always made his daughter feel loved.

Ben never missed an appointment, and Hattie connected Ben with a lawyer to stave off eviction, got his daughter into child care, helped him secure SNAP and WIC benefits, and used the school's resource book to help him find a part-time job. Additionally, Hattie referred Ben to the campus food pantry, which he and Maria needed right away before their SNAP and WIC benefits kicked in, and which they continued to use as an important supplement when the benefits still weren't enough. Hattie says she was excited every time Ben showed up and that at the beginning of the next academic year, when she ran into him

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at nursing orientation, she witnessed that despite all his struggles, he was still there working on his degree. She said, "He was smiling and I was so happy."

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 coordinated access to all of the supports and resources available to students, like Ben, is critical. We must do our best to support those that are working hard to invest in their futures, and allow individuals from economically vulnerable backgrounds a fair shot at an education, and subsequently, social mobility.

### **Recommendations and Broader Policy Issues**

Single Stop offers three specific policy recommendations. The first—make K-12 school lunch universal and free—recognizes that for students to be successful enough to make it to college, adequate nutrition is a crucial prerequisite. The second—increased access to food pantries, EBT-accepting food stores, and other student support services on college campuses—has the potential to give low-income college students immediate relief from food insecurity during the day and increase the chances of college completion. The last recommendation is more comprehensive, recognizing that finding more efficient and effective ways to link low-income individuals and families to social safety net programs increase the chances that we alleviate poverty in this country.

#### **1. Make K-12 school meals universal and free**

The fact that nearly one in four of the city's children lived in households that lacked sufficient food in 2014 is staggering.<sup>18</sup> Hunger prevents children from reaching their full potential in school and otherwise. Simply put, when children do not have enough to eat, they cannot come to school ready to learn. They are more likely to fall ill. They are less likely to graduate from high school and go on to college in order to build a foundation for economic security and provide for their children down the line.<sup>19</sup> This is what is at stake; an unfair trajectory of continued poverty.

In the 2014-15 school year, the New York City Department of Education approved free lunches for most public middle school students. This was a significant victory for anti-hunger advocates but this work needs to be better publicized to families with middle school students, especially community college students with children, a potentially economically vulnerable group. Further, this program needs to be made available to public elementary and high school students.

Universal school meals means students will be encouraged to eat school lunch without the fear of bullying or harassment. By ending the poverty stigma around school lunch and putting all students on equal footing, more students can eat school lunch and benefit from this important meal. We must advocate for universal school meals for all K-12 students.

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<sup>18</sup> New York City Coalition Against Hunger (2014). Hunger in New York City.

<sup>19</sup>No Kid Hungry (2014). Hungry Kids Aren't Getting the Resources they Need.

#### **Single Stop**

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2. **City Council should support the expansion and long-term sustainability of campus food pantries.**

Post-secondary education is largely viewed as a means through which students can improve human and social capital and higher levels of education are associated with decreased food insecurity.<sup>20</sup> If colleges can support their students through periods of tough economic conditions, they will have a greater chance of graduating and pursuing careers that build the foundation for economic security. Therefore, as the number of food pantries on college campuses in New York City begins to rise, traditionally through the work of private partnerships, we recommend that additional partnerships are formed or strengthened, including between CUNY and the city, to continue to expand this important program model. We also ask that the city consider funding Single Stop services as part of CUNY's 2017 budget priorities to ensure that students are getting all of the financial supports and coordinated services they need to graduate.

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

For all of their power and promise, government resource programs fail to reach as many New Yorkers as they could, as effectively as they could. Fragmented delivery mechanisms, conflicting eligibility rules, and complex renewal processes are just some of the factors that prevent sizable numbers of households from receiving all of the resources for which they are potentially eligible or from receiving any resources at all. In New York City, for example, only 77 percent of eligible New York City households participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in 2013.<sup>21</sup> Further, almost 20 percent of New York tax filers eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) fail to claim it.<sup>22</sup> To address participation rates in safety net programs, here below are several areas that Single Stop Site Leads have identified as potential areas for improvement.

*Streamlining and improving ACCESS NYC:*

Single Stop commends the city for its efforts to modernize its ACCESS NYC portal to streamline access to federal public benefit programs. Single Stop strongly encourages the city to continue investing in NYC, as it completes plans to allow clients to apply for Cash Assistance and other programs under the city's administration, and add additional functionality to help reduce churn.

*Outreach:*

We encourage the city to continue using data collected from a wide array of programs to pinpoint populations that are underutilizing services. A myriad of data sources from NYCHA data to information on unpaid utility bills could be used to pinpoint individuals that are eligible but not actually receiving federal support. Using this data, we would recommend that outreach materials for multiple programs be presented to likely eligible populations, at once.

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<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture (2014). Household Food Security in the United States in 2013.

<sup>21</sup> City of New York, Human Resources Administration (2014). SNAP Program Access Index and Participation Rates: 2002-2013.

<sup>22</sup> IRS (2015). EITC Participation Rates by State.

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*Improve processes:*

Site Leads have reported improvement with the New York City Human Resources Administration's (HRA) On-Demand Interview recertification process. We recognize that HRA's SNAP telephone interview staff have worked diligently to meet demand. However, clients are still reporting difficulty getting through to an HRA representative for an interview or to reschedule an interview. We encourage continued improvement of the On-Demand Interview process.

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

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, Single Stop believes that hunger is one symptom of the larger issue of poverty, and that resources to fight hunger such as SNAP, WIC, and food pantries, must be accessed in concert with other resources proven to alleviate poverty such as free tax preparation, health insurance, and financial counseling. Our recommendations to tap into the country's underutilized resources designed to help low-income individuals and families have the potential to help thousands of low-income college students attain the credentials they need to lift themselves out of poverty. The reforms and recommendations we envision do not require the allocation of significant new funds but reimagine the use of existing dollars to increase our nation's college completion rate and bolster the earning potential of our workforce.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Sophia Heller  
Managing Director, New York

Emily Marano  
Policy Analyst

Lindsey Evans  
Policy and Research Fellow

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<sup>i</sup> Food insecurity on college campuses is increasingly on the radar of administrators, who report seeing more hungry students, especially at schools that enroll a high percentage of youths who are from low-income families or are the first generation to attend college. Evidence of this can be seen in the following trend: the number of university food pantries has shot up, from four in 2008 to 121 in 2014. See: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/more-college-students-battle-hunger-as-education-and-living-costs-rise/2014/04/09/60208db6-bb63-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/more-college-students-battle-hunger-as-education-and-living-costs-rise/2014/04/09/60208db6-bb63-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08_story.html).

<sup>ii</sup> The amount of food is based on the New York State Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program's guidelines for packing pantry bags. A spreadsheet provided by the Food Bank indicates low, mid, and high cost estimates for bags of dry goods that supply one, two, or three people with the equivalent of three meals a day for three days. Based on this information, and the assumptions here below, a conservative estimate for serving 100 students, along with one other person in each of their households, for 12 months would cost just over \$14,000.

Assumptions:

- Student population of 100
- Average household size of 2 persons
- Mid-cost price point
- Providing three meals a day for three days

<sup>iii</sup> The number of clients served by Single Stop in NYC alone between Q4 2014 and Q3 2015 = 189,362

<sup>iv</sup> Single Stop is co-located at the following food pantries in New York City: Food Bank, New York Common Pantry, Part of Solution, Project Hospitality, St. John's Bread & Life, River Fund, and West Side Campaign Against Hunger.

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NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE  
***Hunger In New York City***  
Oversight Hearing  
Wednesday, January 13, 2016

**TESTIMONY BY BEATRIZ DIAZ TAVERAS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF  
CATHOLIC CHARITIES COMMUNITY SERVICES, ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK**

**INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

Good Morning Chairman (Councilman) Steven Levin (and other members that may be on panel). Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide testimony before you today. I am Beatriz Diaz Taveras, Executive Director of Catholic Charities Community Services, Archdiocese of New York. I am pleased to speak about the work and experience of Catholic Charities in the delivery of social services and the current challenges specifically in the area of Hunger.

**CATHOLIC CHARITIES BACKGROUND**

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

- Protecting & Nurturing Children & Youth
- Feeding the Hungry and Sheltering the Homeless
- Strengthening Families and Resolving Crises
- Supporting the Physically and Emotionally Challenged
- Welcoming and Integrating Immigrants and Refugees

**Feeding the Hungry and Sheltering the Homeless**

Catholic Charities Community Services' (CCCS) Feeding Our Neighbors 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; Catholic Charities affiliate agencies and a host of community-based non-profits. Over 200 dedicated volunteers support the work of Feeding Our Neighbors staff.

On January 24, 2016, we will launch our Feeding Our Neighbors Campaign, an ecumenical effort to replenish food pantries and soup kitchens in our community, that so many families rely on to survive. Last year, we raised over 1.3 million meals in collaboration with Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, UJA, and our corporate sponsors, Goya and Shoprite.

In keeping with our model of providing holistic support to each individual we serve, we believe it is essential ***to increase case management support available to clients of emergency food programs throughout the network*** – in particular in parish-based programs in high-need neighborhoods. Case management services include SNAP enrollment assistance and advocacy, and connecting clients to community resources to move them toward self-sufficiency.

In New York City, Feeding Our Neighbors encompasses 5 food pantries located within community centers, 26 parish-based food pantries and soup kitchens, a mobile food pantry serving 3 Staten Island sites, and 2 senior centers with meal programs. Last year, the programs served over 3.5 million meals through the combined resources of government grants, donated food, and private donations. Staff size is not large, but a corps of over 200 volunteers makes it possible to receive the deliveries, stock the shelves, and cook the home-style meals to nurture some of the poorest neighborhoods in the city.

It is important to note the many positive changes that have been fostered by past and present members of the City Council. The City's community food program workers have become much more sophisticated in their understanding of the nutritional needs of those we serve, more enmeshed with the local food movement, and more proactive in the ways we interact with those seeking our help. But no amount of knowledge, awareness, or action has been able to change the basic parameters – there are too many New Yorkers who are food insecure and there are not enough resources to reduce their numbers. For us, at Catholic Charities, that translates into lines of people gathering at the doors of our food pantries in Harlem and Washington Heights well before the building is open, and to families crowding into our Bronx-based soup kitchens for what may be their only full meal of the day. While some of the forces at play that produce these scenarios are beyond the scope of City government, there is much that our local leaders have done and can do to chip away at this seemingly unyielding problem.

### **EFAP**

The most heavily-trafficked community food programs in the City benefit greatly from the Emergency Food Assistance Program, otherwise known as EFAP. The larger programs we operate would have to reduce their services by 25% if they were to lose EFAP. By the same token, a significant increase in EFAP funds could help to eliminate the numbers they typically have to turn away for lack of resources. ***We ask that in FY2017, EFAP baseline funding be increased to \$15.3 million, to ensure that the City's most productive and busiest programs can do better and serve more.***

### **SNAP and EITC**

SNAP and the Earned Income Tax Credit represent two of the best available options to reduce the numbers of food insecure in a truly significant way. We applaud ongoing changes which have begun to simplify the ***SNAP application and recertification process, and we recommend that the City double down on these efforts in full partnership with community-based agencies.*** We have seen the demand for ***EITC programs in local communities, and we recommend that funding for this highly effective benefit be enhanced.***

We support policies that are targeted to reduce the struggles of the working poor: fair wages, better access to medical benefits and affordable housing. The causes underlying hunger are well-known and effective solutions are no secret either. It is heartening to see the collective will to make real changes has grown stronger.

### **Conclusion**

Let me close by acknowledging the Council members who continue to fight with us against hunger and for decent work, health care, housing, and access to citizenship. We value your partnership and thank you for your support over the years.

We welcome our continued partnership with you and look forward to an ongoing dialogue that focuses on the dignity of all New Yorkers.

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lisa Levy NYC Coalition Against Hunger

Address: 150 74<sup>th</sup> St Brooklyn NY

I represent: NYC Coalition Against Hunger

Address: 50 Broad St NY NY 10004

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Date: 11/13/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ANITA FEIN

Address: 6581 Hylan Blvd, ST, NY

I represent: ST. EDWARD FOOD PANTRY

Address: 6581 Hylan Blvd NY

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lisa Fitzpatrick, HRA Chief Program Officer

Address: 150 Greenwich St

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Barbara Turk, Director of Food Policy in the  
Address: Office of the Mayor

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: LaMaunda Maharaj, HRA, Director, Emer-  
Address: gency Food & Nutrition Assistance Programs

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Loren Miller  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: United Way of NYC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: IOANNIS DONN

Address: 146 Avenue of the Americas NY, NY

I represent: Good Love We Deliver

Address: 146 Ave of AMERICANS

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Emily Marano

Address: 123 William St, Suite 901

I represent: Single Stop

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ashley Rabinow

Address: 2180 Third Ave NY NY 10035

I represent: CUNY School of Public Health + NYC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Food Policy Center

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Czaczkes

Address: 500 4th Ave 3H Brooklyn 11215

I represent: GMHC

Address: 446 W. 33rd St NY NY 10001

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Name: Paul Carr

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: GMHC &

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Keith Carr

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: City Hall

Address: 6 East 32nd St 5th Floor NY 10016

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Name: Ariel Savransky

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Citizens' Committee for Children

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Stuart Chen

Address: 984 Post

I represent: COTA SF

Address: 984 Post A

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Date: 1.13.16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anthony Butler

Address: 479 17 St 11221

I represent: St. John's Bread + Life

Address: 795 Lexington Ave 11221

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Date: 12/13/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Liz Accles

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Community Food Advocates

Address: 15 Maiden Lane, Gnt 1200

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rachel Sabella

Address: Food Bank For NYC

I represent: 39 Broadway, NY, NY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: 1/13/16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rashida Latef

Address: West Side Campaign Against Hunger

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: 4/13/2016

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Patrick Jean-Baptiste 112.16

Address: 2621 Newkirk Ave Apt #6 Brooklyn, NY

I represent: Mosbia Soup Kitchen Network

Address: ~~475~~ 1776 97<sup>th</sup> St Brooklyn, NY

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rena Resnick

Address: 120 Broadway

I represent: Metropolitan Council on Jewish

Address: Poverty

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