



FOOD INDUSTRY ALLIANCE OF NEW YORK STATE, INC.

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Testimony

By the Food Industry Alliance of New York State, Inc.

in Support of

Int. No. 1519-A-2017

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Food Industry Alliance of New York State (FIA) regarding Int. No. 1519-A-2017. FIA is a nonprofit trade association that promotes the interests statewide of New York’s grocery, drug and convenience stores. Our members include chain and independent grocery stores that account for a significant share of New York City’s retail food market and the grocery wholesalers that supply them, as well as drug and convenience stores.

FIA supports the amended legislation, which requires the Department of Social Services, in coordination with the Department for the Aging, to design and implement a public campaign to increase the awareness of seniors and their caregivers of the benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and to reduce any stigma associated with enrolling in or recertifying for such benefits. In addition, the amended bill requires the departments to establish and implement an enrollment and recertification program to enable eligible seniors to enroll in or recertify for SNAP at each senior center.

Maximizing SNAP enrollment of eligible populations should be a top policy priority for the city. Increasing the enrollment of eligible senior citizens is especially important, since they are under enrolled. According to the National Council on Aging, in fiscal year 2014, while 83% of all eligible individuals participated in SNAP, just 42% of eligible elderly individuals were enrolled in the program. AARP points out that “...67 percent of struggling older people age 60 and above” who are eligible for SNAP benefits are not receiving them. AARP asserts that as a result “...millions of seniors today are suffering from the debilitating effects of hunger and poor nutrition, despite the fact that most of these 67 percent paid taxes to support the program for years.”

For the foregoing reasons, FIA, on behalf of its members, supports adoption of the amended legislation. We thank Councilmember Koslowitz for sponsoring the bill and her thoughtful work on this issue. We look forward to working with government stakeholders to facilitate its enactment.

Respectfully submitted,

Food Industry Alliance of New York State, Inc.

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July 19, 2017