

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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September 6, 2017
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway-Committee Rm. 16th Fl.

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

FERNANDO CABRERA
ANNABEL PALMA
VANESSA L. GIBSON
COREY D. JOHNSON
RITCHIE J. TORRES
BARRY S GRODENCHIK
RAFAEL SALAMANCA, JR.

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

Rachel Sabella
Director of Government Relations at Food Bank for
New York City

Rashida Latef
Advocacy Coordinator at Westside Campaign Against
Hunger, WSCHA

Terri Hubbard
Customer at Westside Campaign Against Hunger,
WSCHA, SNAP Recipient

Danette Rivera
Executive Director of JITA Community Outreach
Center in Jamaica, Queens

Jessica Hughson-Andrade
Director of Benefits Access at the Metropolitan
Council and Jewish Poverty

Natasha McCray
Member of the Food Action Board of Hunger Free
America, SNAP Recipient

Daniel Reyes
Deputy Executive Director at the New York Common
Pantry

Barbara Hart
Member of Hunger Free America, SNAP Recipient

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[gavel]

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good morning

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everybody, thank you very much for your patience, my

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apologies for my tardiness. I want to thank you all

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for being here. My name is Council Member Stephen

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Levin, I'm Chair of the Council's General Welfare

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Committee. This morning we'll be hearing and voting

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on a pre-considered resolution sponsored by Speaker

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Meliaa Mark-Viverito urging Congress to reject

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proposed reforms to cut funding to SNAP benefits and

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to reject Congress's efforts to convert this program

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into a block grant. First, I would like to thank the

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Speaker for introducing this resolution and her

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ongoing work in addressing issues related to food

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security. I'd also like to thank all of the advocates

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and providers who are partners in working to address

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hunger here in New York City many of whom are here to

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testify this morning. Before we begin I want to

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acknowledge my colleagues who have joined us today

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from members of this committee all from the Bronx so

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the Bronx made it all the... made it down here, no

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other borough made it down here..

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[off-mic applause]

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: So, I want to thank
3 Council Member's Vanessa, Vanessa Gibson, Ritchie
4 Torres, and Fernando Cabrera for being here today. We
5 are here today to discuss Congress's proposed cuts
6 to, to funding for SNAP, an effort to convert the
7 program into a block grant. The Supplemental
8 Nutrition Assistance Program otherwise known as SNAP
9 provides critical food assistance to people
10 struggling to make ends meet and it's contributed to
11 the overall reduction in poverty nationwide. In
12 addition, numerous studies have shown that access to
13 SNAP benefits reduces food insecurity for all while
14 also improving health and educational outcomes for
15 children. According to the Food Research and Action
16 Center SNAP is considered to be one of the most
17 effective forms of economic stimulus because every
18 dollar of SNAP benefits that is spent generates about
19 one point.. or \$1.79 in local economic activity. As of
20 July 2017, nearly 1.7 million New York City residents
21 receives SNAP benefits with New York City residents
22 making up more than half of all New York State
23 participants in SNAP. The average SNAP household
24 across the nation receives about 255 dollars a month
25 in SNAP benefits which amounts to a meager 1.4

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2 dollars per person per meal. In recent years there
3 have been proposals put forward by Congress and other
4 groups to either cut SNAP funding or convert it into
5 a block grant. This proposal now has increased
6 traction due to President Donald Trump's proposed
7 2018 budget which would cut SNAP benefits nationally
8 by 193 billion dollars over ten years. Under this
9 budget federal funding for SNAP benefits would be
10 shifted over to the responsibility of the states with
11 the potential to increase New York State's
12 contribution to SNAP by 25 percent by 2023. In
13 addition, SNAP benefits could be cut and stricter
14 eligibility requirements could be set in place. This
15 shift in cost would mean the New York State would
16 have to contribute approximately 1.2 billion dollars
17 a year by 2023 to SNAP benefits. This would most
18 likely cause state officials to reduce benefits, cut
19 other programs to maintain funding, raise taxes or
20 revenues and or shift costs to New York City and
21 other local bodies. In addition, families that
22 struggle even with the current level of SNAP benefits
23 would be forced into even worse financial hardship
24 and protentional negative health outcomes. At a time
25 when levels of food insecurity and financial hardship

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2 remain high SNAP benefits are needed now more than
3 ever. President Trump and Congress's, Congress's
4 intention to reduce SNAP benefits would drastically
5 hurt children and families across the nation. We
6 cannot allow this. Representatives and entities
7 across the nation have shown their support for SNAP
8 benefits. Jurisdictions such as the General Assembly
9 of Pennsylvania, the Albany City Council, the
10 Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska and the Marion
11 County Board of Supervisors along with the Alaska,
12 Alaskan Governor Walker, North Dakota State Rep,
13 Gretchen Doberovich all have been vital in supporting
14 efforts to stop reduction in SNAP benefits, it's
15 clearly a nationwide issue. These bodies and
16 representatives have been on the forefront in writing
17 letters and passing legislation to support SNAP
18 benefits while fighting Congress and the President's
19 motives to reduce these benefits. In passing this
20 resolution New York City looks to promote other
21 entities and representatives across the nation to
22 pass and support similar legislation that fights
23 efforts to reduce SNAP benefits, we must stand on the
24 side of those that rely on SNAP benefits. Many people
25 are counting on us to ensure that they continue to

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2 have access to food assistance that they need. We'll
3 now hear testimony from advocates, food pantry
4 providers, and clients in regard to SNAP benefits and
5 hear testimony describing the negative effects of a
6 federal decrease in SNAP benefits on both the
7 national and local level. After the testimony, we
8 will be voting on this pre-considered resolution so I
9 urge my colleagues to vote yes on today's resolution.
10 I'd like to thank the council staff for their work
11 on... to prepare for today's hearing; Policy Analyst
12 Connie Cyrus, Council Andrea Vazquez. I'd also like
13 to thank my Communications Director Ed Paulino and my
14 Chief of Staff Jonathan Boucher. I would also like to
15 welcome Council Member's Barry Grodenchik of Queens
16 and Rafael Salamanca from the Bronx. So, Bronx, four;
17 Queens, one; Brooklyn Manhattan, zero. So, first off,
18 we're going to call the first panel, Rachel Sabella
19 from the Food Bank of New York, Terri Hubbard,
20 Westside Campaign against Hunger and Rashida Latef,
21 Westside Campaign Against Hunger, and Daniel Reyes,
22 New York Common Pantry. Before the... so, we're
23 actually going to have to vote before we hear the
24 testimony so... but the testimony obviously is, is
25 going to retroactively inform our vote. So, I'm going

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2 to ask William Martin to call the roll of Council
3 Members on the Committee.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: William Martin
5 Committee Clerk, roll call vote Committee on General
6 Welfare, pre-considered resolution, Chair Levin?

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I vote aye.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Cabrera?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Gibson?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Permission to
12 briefly explain my vote?

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you very
15 much Chair Levin and to all of my colleagues who are
16 here. I'm really grateful that we have an opportunity
17 to discuss this resolution before the committee. I
18 want to thank our Chair Steve Levin and certainly our
19 Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito for their steadfast
20 support in making sure that we collectively work
21 together to take a huge bite out of hunger. To the
22 Food Bank and to Hunger Free America and to all of
23 the advocates who are truly here, thank you because
24 this city council has been extremely passionate and
25 aggressive in our approach and our priority is to

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2 make sure that food is never a hindrance to the
3 progress of our children and families and my
4 colleagues in the Bronx and I have taken it a step
5 further and we have been working with the Department
6 of Health and Mental Hygiene to fund Health Bucks so
7 we can give out two dollar coupons to families at
8 green markets and farmer's markets and food pantries
9 and soup kitchens to ensure that families have access
10 to fruits and vegetables. We know for many of our
11 families and communities of low income and immigrants
12 and seniors and those on fixed incomes we know that
13 it's a challenge for them and obviously we want to
14 reduce the costs, we want to reduce the burden as
15 much as we can and so unfortunately I have to step
16 out because I have a public safety hearing at eleven
17 o'clock but I want to make sure I go on record in
18 making sure all of the advocates know you have a
19 supporter in myself and I will not only talk the
20 talk, I'll walk the walk and we'll make sure that we
21 continue to commit money where this council's
22 commitment is to eradicate hunger. The mayor and many
23 others we are going to be announcing the Universal
24 Free Lunch for every student in a public school in
25 this city because we want to make sure we equalize

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2 and level the playing field that no child is
3 stigmatized because they simply cannot afford free
4 lunch, they cannot afford lunch at all. So, I want to
5 thank Chair Levin, I want to thank our Speaker, thank
6 you for your testimony and even before you submit
7 your testimony I will always vote aye and I want to
8 vote aye on this resolution before the committee and
9 thank all of my colleagues for being here today,
10 thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council
12 Member Gibson.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Torres?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [off-mic] I vote
15 aye.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Grodenchik?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Permission to
18 explain my vote briefly? I want to thank the Chair
19 for taking up this, this resolution and it's kind of
20 sad to me... very sad to me, I've had the pleasure of
21 working with many of the advocates in this room and
22 with the Chair on feeding people here in this city
23 and it's really to me a great tragedy that, that
24 there are people in this country willing to turn
25 their back especially on young people who need to

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2 eat, we all need to eat, our health is where it's at
3 so I am very happy to support this resolution and
4 will continue to work with all of you, our Chair, my
5 colleagues, our Speaker, our future Speaker to fight
6 hunger in this city and to set a... an example for the
7 rest of the nation, thank you. I vote aye.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Salamanca?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Aye.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: By a vote of six
11 in the affirmative, zero in the negative and no
12 abstentions the resolution has been adopted by the
13 committee.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Okay and
15 we'll turn it over to the panel now whoever wants to
16 begin.

17 RACHEL SABELLA: Sure. Good morning, my
18 name is... can you hear me? My name is Rachel Sabella,
19 I am the Director of Government Relations at Food
20 Bank for New York City. Food Bank is the city's
21 largest major hunger relief organization and I'm
22 thrilled to be joined on this panel and in the
23 audience by many of our member agencies that are here
24 to testify today. I am going to be very brief because
25 what's most important is you hear directly from

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2 providers and clients on this but first I want to
3 thank the City Council for continuing to prioritize
4 hunger. I remember sitting in the Loew's King Theatre
5 listening to the speaker talk about hunger and her
6 vision to end hunger in New York City and it is a
7 privilege to work with this council, to work with you
8 Chair, to work with the members of the committee and
9 the Speaker as we work in this battle and to hear
10 this resolution today. SNAP is the first line of
11 defense against hunger. In New York City 1.7 million
12 residents rely on hunger... rely on SNAP, that's one in
13 five generally on that. In, in SNAP provides more
14 meals to New Yorkers in ten weeks alone than our
15 entire network is able to do in one year, the current
16 proposed cuts if they were to be realized 193 billion
17 over ten years would have catastrophic events on New
18 York City. Already strained food pantries and soup
19 kitchens would have even more of a reliance on their
20 resources but more importantly people would struggle.
21 That putt would mean 45 billion meals lost across the
22 country, not a million, a billion and this resolution
23 is one of the first steps in this process. The end of
24 the month Food Bank and our network will be traveling
25 to Washington DC to advocate on behalf of SNAP and we

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2 will be giving this resolution to every member of the
3 congressional delegation and when we... will be sharing
4 with it... with our partners across the state and
5 across the country. So, I'm going to stop talking now
6 but I want to thank you again for this resolution and
7 pass it on but we are... continue to be grateful and
8 want to continue to work with the council on this
9 partnership.

10 RASHIDA LATEF: Hello? Okay. Good
11 morning, I'm Rashida Latef, I'm the Advocacy
12 Coordinator at Westside Campaign Against Hunger. We
13 would like to thank Council Member Stephen Levin,
14 Chair of the General Welfare Committee for the
15 opportunity to oppose any and all cuts to the
16 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. WSCHA
17 would also like to thank city council... the city
18 council and Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito for
19 consistently prioritizing anti-hunger programs with
20 increases to the emergency food assistance program
21 and the expansion of Universal Free School Lunch in
22 nearly all New York City public schools. Founded in
23 1979 Westside Campaign Against Hunger is, is the
24 country's first supermarket style food pantry, multi-
25 service and one of the largest emergency food

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2 providers in the city. In the last year, we provided
3 nearly 1.5 million pounds of food which included over
4 300,000 pounds of fresh fruits and fresh vegetables
5 to nearly 9,000 households but our customers come to
6 us for more than groceries. WSCAH combines access to
7 healthy food with entitlement benefits, job training
8 and policy advocacy to work in partnership with our
9 customers by emphasizing their right to self-
10 determination and dignity. As the country's first
11 supermarket style food pantry we offer three days of
12 food based on a customer's family size in tandem with
13 SNAP, health insurance, SCRIE/DRIE and eviction
14 prevention to name a few to not only alleviate hunger
15 but to alleviate reliance on the emergency food
16 system as a whole. In fiscal year 2017, WSCAH
17 enrolled 690 families on SNAP. SNAP has a far greater
18 capacity than emergency food providers to meet the
19 needs of those who are food insecure. The emergency
20 food system was never designed to replace SNAP as the
21 first defense against hunger. SNAP does in two months
22 or as Rachel Sabella had said, ten weeks what
23 emergency food providers would do in a year and
24 therefore it plays an irreplaceable role in ending
25 hunger. The 690 families we enrolled in SNAP are a

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2 smaller representation of the approximately 1.7
3 million residents in New York City who rely on SNAP.
4 Any cut in SNAP whatsoever would without a doubt
5 adversely impact New Yorkers in all five boroughs.
6 The proposed White House budget would cut more than
7 193 billion to SNAP over ten years. Consequently, the
8 proposed cuts to SNAP would increase demand on
9 emergency food programs like WSCAH all across the
10 city. Once again, we'd like to thank the City
11 Council's General Welfare Committee for the
12 opportunity to testify about the need to oppose any
13 and all cuts to SNAP. Thank you.

14 TERRI HUBBARD: Good morning, good
15 morning. My name is Terri Hubbard, I'm a customer at
16 the Westside Campaign Against Hunger which is better
17 known as WSCAH. I would like to thank Councilman
18 Stephen Levin and I would like to thank Council
19 Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito for fighting for the
20 New Yorkers like myself who are food insecure by
21 increasing funding for the emergency food assistance
22 program and expanding Universal School Food... School
23 Lunch for nearly all of New York City public schools.
24 I became a customer at WSCAH six years ago and I have
25 been volunteering at WSCAH for the last four years, I

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2 am a SNAP recipient and with my allotment of 338
3 dollars it includes my son who also has autism. I
4 live in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and I travel on
5 Access-A-Ride to go all the way up to Westside
6 Campaign Against Hunger because of the wide variety
7 of fruits and fresh vegetables for me and my son.
8 While being able to access healthy foods and to be
9 helpful to us just cutting the SNAP benefits it
10 cannot work because honestly, it's very sufficient.
11 Being an individual with diabetes and a cancer
12 survivor receiving fresh fruits and vegetables is
13 just important for my survival. I also became a
14 customer representative on the Board of Directors at
15 the Westside Campaign Against Hunger. Like you I was
16 elected a representative to the people who depend on
17 my advocacy which in my case are nearly 9,000
18 households of WSCAH customers some of whom who are
19 undocumented immigrants from all over New York City.
20 You've learned a little bit about my story just a tad
21 bit but there are many others like me, their lives
22 depend on the access to SNAP, the proposed budget
23 cuts would devastate so many people who depend on
24 SNAP. Emergency food providers are critical in our
25 community as a resource but they cannot replace the

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2 role of SNAP. SNAP plays an increasing access to
3 consistent and healthy meals. From one representative
4 to another I am equally invested in the fight to
5 reserve SNAP as the first line of defense against
6 hunger. Once again, I would like to thank you and the
7 City Council's General Welfare Committee for the
8 opportunity to testify and oppose the cuts to SNAP.

9 DANETTE RIVERA: Thank you to the City
10 Council, especially Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and
11 General Welfare Chair Stephen Levin for continuing to
12 prioritize anti-hunger programs including three years
13 of increases to the emergency food assistance program
14 EFAP as well as expansion of Universal Free School
15 Lunch in nearly all New York City public schools. My
16 name is Danette Rivera and I am the Executive
17 Director of JITA Community Outreach Center, a food
18 pantry located in Jamaica, Queens. For three years we
19 have been serving over a thousand men, women, and
20 children every month on a weekly basis so we see
21 firsthand the hunger crisis going on right in our
22 community. I have joined this panel today proud to
23 call this council not only my New York City Council
24 but the city council of every single person that
25 receives food assistance from my pantry and across

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2 the five boroughs. It is because of your selfless
3 efforts against one of the world's greatest enemies,
4 hunger that thousands of my clients and many more
5 people throughout New York City have food in their
6 stomachs. So, thank you but the fight continues, the
7 proposed White House budget could have a devastating
8 impact on the anti-hunger safety net. The budget
9 proposes a cut of more than 193 billion to SNAP over
10 ten years as you already know which will
11 significantly impact those who use SNAP to put food
12 on the table. Therefore, the need still exists to
13 defend SNAP which ensures nutrition, health, and hope
14 for 1.7 million New York City residents. We must
15 persist in pleading on behalf of what is imperative,
16 that no human being should go to bed hungry. SNAP is
17 the first line of defense against hunger and must be
18 protected at all cost. Thank you for taking a stand
19 to ensure SNAP is here to stay. Once again, I want to
20 thank the city council for introducing this
21 resolution, we look forward to working with you to
22 protect SNAP and continue to help New Yorkers. Thank
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much to
25 this panel. I... it's... one quick question if you could

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2 maybe describe what you would envision as... if, if
3 cuts like this went through what it would... what it
4 would mean on a practical day to day basis for the
5 programs that you... that you run and that you work in
6 and that you... and that you partake in?

7 DANETTE RIVERA: For myself like many of
8 us already stated it would be devastating. We
9 wouldn't be able to manage the overflow. I'm open two
10 days a week and it would mean having, having probably
11 to open 24/7. The resources that we have aren't
12 enough now imagine if this was to happen, this is...
13 this is insane, it cannot... it cannot... it cannot be
14 happening, it cannot, this cannot be allowed to
15 happen.

16 TERRI HUBBARD: These cuts will be
17 devastating not only to us at Westside Campaign
18 Against Hunger. On any given day at Westside Campaign
19 especially on Wednesdays we handle anywhere from two
20 to 500 people in one day, we're closed on Tuesdays
21 because that's the day we receive our full deliveries
22 but in actuality we have deliveries that are coming
23 in from City Harvest, Food Bank and Fairway
24 Supermarkets because we are in need and it's a
25 crisis. Not only that but when these budgets are cut

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2 the proposed budgets, we're looking at the future
3 recipients of Westside Campaign Against Hunger, we're
4 talking about the mass incarceration, those who are
5 coming home that the, the revolving door with
6 citizens and... will be as higher than ever in the
7 United States history because when those individuals
8 come to us how would they suffice on a three day
9 meal, we only give them enough to survive three days,
10 could you imagine having that cut in half or none at
11 all? So, this does, there's a wonderful... won't... a
12 devastating impact on all of us but it's wonderful if
13 we can keep this going we can enable and stop the
14 recidivism and help those who are in need in our
15 communities.

16 RACHEL SABELLA: I just want to add very
17 briefly, from a practical standpoint SNAP benefits
18 generally do not last the month for clients, they
19 tend to run out in the third week so food pantries
20 and soup kitchens the last week of the month are
21 really seeing increases in numbers and increases in
22 people coming. So, if the cuts were to happen then
23 that would mean people... they won't even last a week
24 that funding or people would lose those benefits so
25 the reality is the impact would be absolutely

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2 devastating not only across the city but across the
3 country.

4 RASHIDA LATEF: To echo Rachel the
5 emergency food system as it exists, exists and is
6 designed specifically to supplement SNAP so we are
7 the supplement of the supplement if this... if the
8 primary supplement, SNAP being the first line of
9 defense against hunger which we have heard resounding
10 the... across this panel if that were to, you know
11 experience any cut there is no way that the only
12 other system in place to supplement that would even
13 have the capacity to meet those needs. The Emergency
14 Food System was just never designed to do that, we
15 were you know designed to provide people with as
16 Rachel has explained it is the busiest time of any
17 month the end of the month because that's when people
18 are running out. So, we supplement by trying to
19 provide three days' worth of food while people have
20 run out of their SNAP and trust me, people even run
21 out of the SNAP and then they run out of the three-
22 day allotment that's provided to them and that's what
23 happening with the resources as is. Every, every year
24 we join Food Bank with other food bank members across
25 the city to travel to DC as Rachel has said earlier

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2 in the testimony and we advocate for increases, we
3 advocate for increases to, to what's already existing
4 and we are now trying to advocate for cuts... against
5 cuts of what's already existing so... that we advocate
6 every year to try to increase what we already have
7 and that we're experiencing threats to what we
8 already have, I mean we make the point over and over
9 again when we argue for increases. So, now we're
10 making an even more, you know urgent cry for why... you
11 know at the very least it, it must sustain the same,
12 you know we're just not designed to, to do that so it
13 would be extremely devastating.

14 DANETTE RIVERA: I just want to say one
15 more thing. There's nothing more scary than a hungry
16 human being, I mean there's no telling what can occur
17 in the mind of human being who needs to feed their
18 children or you know themselves and they can't find
19 food, people are willing to do anything to put food
20 on the table and crime would just increase, it would
21 be madhouse out there on the streets. I just don't...
22 my heart is pounding imagining what this world would
23 look like without SNAP and so that's my fear and my
24 concern that, you know we need to save this program,
25 period, thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you so much to this panel, thank you. One more panel; Natasha McCray, Hunger Free America; Barbara Hart, Hunger Free America; Jessica Hugh, Hugh... so, Hughson-Andrade, right? Hughson-Andrade and then Danette Rivera...

DANETTE RIVERA: I'm sorry, I just went...

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Oh, oh I'm sorry, I'm sorry, yes, got it...

[off-mic dialogue]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Oh okay, I'm sorry, I have him... I have him, Daniel Reyes, sorry. And whoever wants to begin.

JESSICA HUGHSON-ANDRADE: Good morning, thank you to the city... to the city council especially Speaker Mark... Melissa Mark-Viverito and General Welfare Chair, Steve Levin for continuing to prioritize anti-hunger programs including three years of increases to EFAP as well as the expansion of Universal Free School Meals in nearly all NYC public schools. I want to thank the General Welfare Committee for holding this hearing on critical resolution on SNAP for which is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program formally known as Food

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2 Stamps. My name is Jessica Hughson-Andrade and I am
3 the Director of Benefits Access at the Metropolitan
4 Council and Jewish Poverty. At our agency, nearly
5 6,000 clients rely on SNAP and nearly 15,000 clients
6 rely on our emergency food network each year to
7 supply their families with meals. For more than four
8 decades Met Council has supported and championed
9 families, seniors and adults living in poverty and
10 near poverty. Met Council provides immediate
11 assistance to New Yorkers in crisis and creates
12 pathways to self-sufficiency through the following
13 programs. America's largest kosher food pantry
14 system, emergency social services, family violence
15 services, home repairs, home care services, benefits
16 enrollment and outreach and affordable housing. Our
17 grass roots Jewish Community Council Network provides
18 support to families in their neighborhoods right
19 where they live. As the first line of defense against
20 hunger we recognize the critical impact that SNAP has
21 in lifting people out of poverty and aiding them on
22 their path to self-sufficiency. The proposed cuts
23 under the current administration more than 193
24 billion over ten years would put the children,
25 seniors, and families that we serve into extreme

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2 poverty. Unfortunately, New York City's Emergency
3 Food Network cannot shoulder these additional cuts
4 alone. In 2013 New York City witnessed an 80 percent
5 increase in visitors and a 60 percent shortage on
6 food according to the Food Bank for New York City
7 with the Sunset of the American Recovery and
8 Reinvestment Act of 2009. Though 193 billion-dollar
9 cuts proposed in the White House budget loom much
10 larger than those we have already experienced to
11 date. These cuts significantly impact those who rely
12 on SNAP to put food on the table, we must work
13 together to fight any and all proposed cuts to SNAP
14 to ensure a strong safety net that can respond when
15 New Yorkers fall on hard times. Once again, I want to
16 thank you for introducing this resolution, we look
17 forward to working with you to protect SNAP and to
18 help New Yorkers, I'd be happy to take any questions
19 that you have, thank you.

20 NATASHA MCCRAY: Good morning, my name is
21 Natasha McCray and I'm here on behalf of Hunger Free
22 America and I'm also a SNAP recipient. I have been a
23 member of the Food Action Board of Hunger Free
24 America since 2011. I have a 13-year-old and a two-
25 year-old child and a few months ago, not even a few...

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2 a year ago my SNAP benefits were rescinded and I went
3 almost three months without food stamps, SNAP
4 benefits and it was the hardest time of my life.
5 Being pregnant and having a child who was in school
6 at the same time, so these benefits if they're cut
7 are devastating to not only my family but to my
8 friends and my community. I live in the Bronx which
9 is the nation's poorest borough so with cuts to SNAP
10 benefits it... a huge devastation to our economic
11 abilities to be able to provide for our families so
12 we implore you and we thank you for benefiting and
13 helping to make sure that this cut doesn't go through
14 because it is a necessity for people like myself and
15 people in my community. With hurricane Harvey, all
16 over the world with all of these different
17 destructions that are happening the need for SNAP,
18 the need for programs such as this to be able to help
19 people in emergencies is even more dyer. So, I
20 implore you to make sure that this particular program
21 continues, thank you.

22 DANIEL REYES: Hello, my name is Daniel
23 Reyes, I'm the Deputy Executive Director at the New
24 York Common Pantry which has locations in East
25 Harlem, Mott Haven, Longwood, and Hunts Point and

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2 where we serve New Yorkers from across the city.
3 Thank you to the city council especially Speaker
4 Melissa Mark-Viverito and General Welfare Chair Steve
5 Levin for giving me the opportunity to speak on
6 behalf of the thousands of families that the New York
7 Common Pantry serves across New York City. At the New
8 York Common Pantry our strategy is to alleviate food
9 insecurity through access to healthy food, wellness,
10 nutrition education, and the acquisition and
11 management of resources. The third part, the
12 acquisition of resources like SNAP are vital to
13 giving families the opportunity to reach a level of
14 stasis and dignity where they are not in a position
15 of having to decide whether dinner is served tonight
16 or the rent gets paid. We are grateful that the city
17 council continues to prioritize anti-hunger programs
18 including three years of increases to the Emergency
19 Food Assistance Program as well as expansion of
20 Universal Free Lunch in nearly all of New York City
21 public schools. At the New York Common Pantry last
22 fiscal year, we served over six million meals to
23 thousands of households. Approximately 90 percent of
24 those households rely on both SNAP and food pantries
25 to, to supply their families with meals. New York

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2 Common Pantry continues to extend its reach across
3 the city to ensure that no family or individual goes
4 hungry but we cannot do this alone, the most
5 sustainable and strategic tool we have is SNAP, it is
6 the first line of defense against food insecurity for
7 1.7 million people in New York City and it must be
8 protected at all cost. We must work together to fight
9 any and all proposed cuts to SNAP and ensure the
10 program is protected so individuals struggling with
11 food insecurity can continue to rely on it. in our 37
12 years of existence, the New York Common Pantry and
13 our families have weathered many economic and
14 political storms but 193 billion dollars in proposed
15 budget cuts to SNAP over ten years would be
16 devastating all around. For the families and
17 individuals who will lose some if not all of this
18 vital resource for the emergency feeding network in
19 the city that would struggle greatly to meet the
20 demand as families lose resources and for local
21 economies that would lose a key part of the social..
22 of the economic engine that fuels them. this
23 resolution needs to send a loud and clear message,
24 leave SNAP alone. I want to thank the city council
25 for introducing this resolution and we continue to..

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2 we continue to look forward to working with you on
3 this important matter.

4 BARBARA HART: Wait a minute, hello? Hi,
5 okay. My name is Barbara Hart and I'm a member of
6 Hunger Free American and I would like to say God
7 bless everybody who attended today and I'm grateful
8 to be on the panel to talk about the SNAP benefits.
9 I'm, I'm a mother of seven but only three children
10 live with me and my grandson and my SNAP benefits has
11 been cut, raised, cut, raised and due to my son, my
12 youngest son getting a job and then he lost the job
13 and then he was on employment and that, you know as
14 things change in your composition you have to let
15 them know so it will be devastating like some of the
16 people said on the panel before me, can you imagine
17 like when they had the blackout and everybody was
18 going to the stores and was stealing and acting crazy
19 well if you don't have no food that could happen
20 again without the lights even going off, right? And
21 so, I'm grateful to be a part of Hunger Free America
22 and somebody else said on the panel about going to
23 the legislation, I did that, going to Capitol Hill, I
24 did that and I'm going to continue to do that,
25 anything that got anything to do with anything that's

1
2 negative I'm going to be a part of and I want to also
3 say the last thing is, no more cuts, no more cuts, no
4 more cuts.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you and thank
6 you... this... thank you very much to this panel and for,
7 you know bring... and the previous panel for bringing
8 this issue into such clear... such a clear picture.
9 The, the, the word that stuck out for me in hearing
10 these two panels testimony, devastation that's what
11 would happen, it would be... it would be devastation,
12 it would be devastating to families, it would be
13 devastating to communities, it would be devastating
14 to our economy here in New York City and these are
15 the types of things that we need to stand up against
16 and we so greatly appreciate your doing this and
17 taking on this civic responsibility, you know there
18 are times... you know we are presented with different
19 challenges, you know at times and so you know after
20 9/11 this city was... had challenge... was presented with
21 challenges and we had to, to, to rebuild this city
22 and after the economic crisis that was precipitated
23 by, you know unscrupulous and irresponsible banking
24 practices and real estate practices and then when
25 the, the bottom fell out of the economy we were

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2 presented with, with challenges. Today we have an
3 administration in, in Washington that is aiming to
4 dismantle everything that we've worked for, for
5 generations to build up in helping New Yorkers that
6 need help and Americans that need help and so that's
7 our challenge now is to... is to make sure that we are
8 firmly and conscientiously saying no and, and saying
9 not, not going to happen on our watch, we're not
10 going to go along with this and so I want to thank
11 you for taking on that responsibility of testifying
12 here today, of organizing in your communities, taking
13 on the responsibility of being on the board of Hunger
14 Free America. So, I, I, I just want to thank you very
15 much for being here today and for taking on that...
16 this, this challenge. This resolution is going to be
17 a part of the response to that, it's not the entire
18 response and so we need to keep on fighting. So, this
19 is an important thing we're doing today but it is... it
20 is one step in, in a longer struggle. So, I want to
21 thank you very much though, thank you for your
22 testimony. So, here now at 11:07 a.m. since we
23 already have the vote we will... will be closing this
24 hearing, thank you again to everybody that came to
25 testify, I will look forward to passing this

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resolution at the stated meeting tomorrow, thank you.

This hearing is closed.

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date

September 11, 2017