

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEES ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
EDUCATION, AND GENERAL WELFARE

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September 18, 2019  
Start: 1:16 p.m.  
Recess: 4:57 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Paul A. Vallone  
Chairperson  
Committee on Economic Development

Mary Treyger  
Chairperson  
Committee on Education

Stephen T. Levin  
Chairperson  
Committee on General Welfare

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Brad S. Lander  
Carlos Menchaca  
Farah N. Louis  
Inez D. Barron  
Keith Powers  
Mark Gjonaj  
Peter Koo  
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.

Committee on Education  
Alicka Ampry-Samuel  
Andy L. King  
Barry S. Grodenczik  
Ben Kallos  
Brad S. Lander  
Daniel Dromm  
Deborah L. Rose  
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Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.  
Stephen T. Levin  
Ydanis A. Rodriguez

Committee on General Welfare  
Antonio Reynoso  
Barry S. Grodenczik  
Brad S. Lander  
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.  
Ritchie J. Torres  
Vanessa L. Gibson

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

Dr. Erin McDonald  
Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer  
for Human Services  
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and  
Human Services  
Mayor's Office of Food Policy

Jill Berry  
HRA

Jenny Osmond  
Director of the Fresh Program  
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Christopher Jacarakow Dewey  
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Sam Bederman  
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Yadira Garcia

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Harper Quill  
Student

Tyler Scott Simpson  
Student

Gail Brewer  
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Isabel Adams

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Susanna Daley  
The Food Chain Workers Alliance

Michelle Villa Gomez  
New York City Legislative Senior Director  
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Allison Gato  
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Joel Berg  
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Jeff Gregg Silverman  
Executive Director  
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Michael Eggins  
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The Food Pantry at Columbia

Lauren Phillips  
Government Relations Manager  
Food Bank for New York City

Mark Eisman  
Senior Attorney  
New York Regional Director  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Jamie McBeth  
Director of Food and Nutrition  
Fortune Society

Steven French  
Director of Philanthropy and Healthy Food  
Initiatives  
Lenox Hill Neighborhood House

Alicia Rodriguez  
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John Nathaniel  
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Ranica Trent  
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Melanie Button  
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Messiah Timmons  
Joshua Delgado  
Teens for Food Justice

Barbara Hughes  
Executive Director  
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Caitlyn Andrews  
Live On New York

Lawrence Ben  
Political Coordinator  
Retail Wholesale Department Store Union  
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Wendy Oshieis  
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2                    PEDRO LUGO: This is the Committee on  
3                    Economic Development, General Welfare, Education.  
4                    Today's date is September 18, 2019. The location is  
5                    the Council Chambers. Recorded by Pedro Lugo.

6                    SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet, please.

7                    CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [gavel] Welcome to  
8                    the Economic Development Committee. Are we ready to  
9                    talk about food and healthy food in New York City? I  
10                  think so, yeah, we could do some healthy food  
11                  [inaudible]. Very excited. We have our three  
12                  committees tackling this long overdue topic. So it's  
13                  going to be a little daunting. I know most of you  
14                  have seen our hearings before, but we're going to  
15                  have numerous panels. We have many people who have  
16                  signed up. So we will have to have some strict time  
17                  limits going forward. I will do my best to steward  
18                  everything through. I managed to get my first day  
19                  with my brace off, so that's a good thing. Italians  
20                  like to talk about food. We also like to have our  
21                  right hand, so that's, need that. So let's start  
22                  off. So good afternoon, welcome to our committee.  
23                  Today is Wednesday, September 19, 2019. My name is  
24                  Paul Vallone and I have the privilege of co-chairing  
25                  this hearing along with my fellow council members,

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2 Mark Treyger, who is on his way, chair of the  
3 Committee on Education, and Steven Levin, chair of  
4 the Committee on General Welfare. I would like to  
5 extend my thanks to all the members of the three  
6 committees for coming together to hold this important  
7 hearing. The purpose of today's hearing is to  
8 discuss a joint legislative package of 16 bills and  
9 two resolutions addressing the issue of food equity  
10 in our city. Last month our leader, Corey, Speaker  
11 Johnson, released a report entitled *Growing Food*  
12 *Equity in New York City*, that's what we held up,  
13 which outlines a number of legislative and budgetary  
14 proposals to improve access to healthy food  
15 throughout our great city. The proposals range from  
16 reducing food waste to expanding nutrition,  
17 education, and promoting the city's burgeoning  
18 agriculturalists and many other issues critical to  
19 improving food equity. In summary, today's hearing  
20 and corresponding proposed legislation will focus on  
21 the following areas: Food governance and hunger in  
22 New York City, food waste, food in our schools,  
23 overall access to food, and today's urban  
24 agriculture. At this point, rather than discuss each  
25 of the 16 pieces of legislation as well as the

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2 limitations that we're all facing to get this through  
3 today, I'm going to focus right now on the pieces of  
4 legislation being heard in my committee of the  
5 economic development committee. I'll begin with  
6 Introduction 1652, sponsored by Alicka Ampry-Samuel,  
7 who is here today, which would prevent the Department  
8 of City Planning from classifying community gardens  
9 as vacant land, instead requiring such areas to be  
10 considered open space or outdoor park recreation.  
11 This measure would protect our community gardens  
12 finally. Introduction 1653, also sponsored by  
13 Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel, would require the  
14 Department of Parks and Recreation to collect and  
15 report data on community gardens and permit the sale  
16 of agricultural products in those gardens with farmer  
17 markets. Introduction 1654, sponsored by Council  
18 Member Diana Ayala, would expand neighborhood  
19 awareness campaigns on neighborhood fresh food  
20 projects, such as community-supported agricultural  
21 partnerships, farmer markets, food boxes, and fresh  
22 pantries. Introduction 1660, sponsored by Council  
23 Member Andrew Cohen, would require the city's  
24 contracting agencies to create a good food purchasing  
25 program for all city food procurement contracts, as

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2                    well as good food purchasing advisory board, to  
3                    oversee its implementation. Introduction 1663,  
4                    sponsored by Council Member Rafael Espinal, would  
5                    establish an Office of Urban Agriculture within the  
6                    Office of the Mayor and an urban agriculture advisory  
7                    board to advise on issues relating to urban  
8                    agriculture. Introduction 1664, sponsored by Council  
9                    Member Vanessa L. Gibson, would require the Mayor's  
10                  Office of Food Policy to develop a comprehensive 10-  
11                  year food policy plan aimed at reducing hunger,  
12                  improving nutrition, increasing access to healthy  
13                  food, and developing the city's local and regional  
14                  food infrastructure. Introduction 1666, sponsored by  
15                  Council Member Ben Kallos, would establish a  
16                  permanent Office of Food Policy within the Office of  
17                  the Mayor to develop and coordinate initiatives to  
18                  promote healthy food, develop food support programs  
19                  for people who cannot afford to purchase food, and  
20                  coordinate with other agencies, such as the Office of  
21                  Long-Term Planning and Sustainability in the  
22                  Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, improving  
23                  food access. Introduction 1673, sponsored by Council  
24                  Member Carlina Rivera, would require all agencies  
25                  with food procurement contracts develop and implement

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2 food waste prevention and reduction plans. Finally,  
3 we will be hearing Introduction 1680, which I have  
4 sponsored along with Speaker Johnson. Way back in  
5 2011 the council passed Local Law 52, which required,  
6 [someone sneezes] God bless you, an annual food  
7 system metrics report from the Office of Long-Term  
8 Planning and Sustainability. This report was an  
9 important first step in tracking food metrics, but it  
10 doesn't provide enough information for the city to  
11 adequately tackle food insecurity. For example, the  
12 report requires the city to track the number of  
13 persons 65 years and older receiving SNAP benefits,  
14 but not the number of people eligible for public food  
15 programs who are not enrolled. Knowing this gap  
16 between eligibility and enrollment will help the city  
17 take the concrete steps to close it. Introduction  
18 1680 would require OLTPS to expand the data and  
19 includes its annual food system metrics report,  
20 including the changing patterns of retail  
21 availability of food, the number of people eligible  
22 for public food programs, the number of businesses  
23 that accepts SNAP, the density of fast food  
24 establishments in each community, the populations  
25 experiencing food insecurity, and the socioeconomic

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2 effects of food insecurity and diet-related illnesses  
3 in our city neighborhoods and schools. This  
4 information will be instrumental in the  
5 implementation of many of the administration's food  
6 equity measures we are discussing here today and will  
7 assist the council in evaluating the success of these  
8 measures in the future. We hope today's hearing will  
9 provide the council with an opportunity to publicly  
10 evaluate each of these proposals with the members of  
11 our community who are here today and colleagues in  
12 administration. In particular, we on the Economic  
13 Development Committee look forward to discussing our  
14 oversight responsibilities over the Office of Food  
15 Policy that will be established by Intro 1666 and  
16 anticipate developing a good working rapport with the  
17 new office as we progress towards a more healthy city  
18 together. I know Chairs Treyger and Levin are eager  
19 to discuss the legislation in each of their  
20 respective committees. Before I hand them the floor  
21 I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the council  
22 members that are here with us. Many will be coming  
23 in and out. There are a few hearings going on today.  
24 But at the moment we have Council Members Louis,  
25 Gibson, Ampry-Samuel, Grodenchik, Rose, Borelli,

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2 Landers, Gjonaj, Treyger, Levin, and Branna. I'd  
3 also like to thank our EDC committee staff,  
4 legislative counsel, Alex Polinoff, policy analyst  
5 Emily Forgione, finance analyst Aleah Lee, as well as  
6 senior policy analyst Nadia Johnson, for all of their  
7 tireless hard work putting this hearing together.

8 I'd now like to turn the floor over to Chair Treyger  
9 to discuss the bills in his education committee.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Chair  
11 Vallone. Good afternoon. I'm Council Member Mark  
12 Treyger, chair of the Education Committee. I'd like  
13 to thank my colleagues for holding today's joint  
14 hearing on a package of legislation on food equity in  
15 New York City. I want to thank again the great  
16 chair, Council Member Paul Vallone, chair of the  
17 Economic Development Committee, and Council Member  
18 Steven, Stephen, Steven Levin, chair of the Committee  
19 on General Welfare for their partnership. When it  
20 comes to New York City's 1.1 million students nothing  
21 is more important than insuring that they are  
22 receiving the education they need in order to be the  
23 next generation of critical thinkers, decision-  
24 makers, advocates, and leaders. But in order to  
25 succeed in the classroom every student needs

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2 nutritious food to live a healthy life and be at  
3 their best each school day. As a former educator  
4 myself I know how critical food governance is at DOE  
5 and how better school food leads to better student  
6 outcomes. Eating a healthy diet and having those  
7 options available to our students helps them stay  
8 alert in class, fight off illness, and grow into  
9 strong and healthy adults. School children get up to  
10 half the food they need each day at school, which  
11 makes New York City schools an important place for  
12 learning healthy eating habits. School food policies  
13 help schools provide students with foods and drinks  
14 that are part of a healthy diet. The DOE offers free  
15 breakfast, which, by the way, the City Council fought  
16 very hard to restore breakfast in the classroom, a  
17 shout out to the council, that's right. We do this  
18 here, that's right [chuckles], ah, yes, and all  
19 public schools also receive free summer meals as  
20 well. Each summer the DOE provides free summer  
21 meals, which is designed to provide children and  
22 young adults with a health alternative to junk food.  
23 The policies we have in place in the city ensure that  
24 year round our students are exposed to and have  
25 access to healthier food options. Today the

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2 Committee on Education will be hearing three pieces  
3 of legislation - Introduction number 1675 by Council  
4 Member Rose. This bill would require the DOE to mail  
5 information about summer meals to the home address of  
6 every student eligible for the federal free and  
7 reduced price lunch program. Introduction number  
8 1676, by Council Member Rosenthal, this bill would  
9 require the DOE to report information regarding the  
10 department's efforts to implement scratch-cooked,  
11 scratch-cooked food service in schools and related  
12 nutrition in health programming. And Introduction  
13 number 1681 by Council Member Van Bramer, this bill  
14 would require the DOE to develop a plan for reducing  
15 food waste and require annual reporting on those  
16 efforts to implement a food waste prevention plan. I  
17 also want to thank everyone who is testifying today,  
18 and I want to thank the City Council staff for all  
19 their work they put into today's hearing, especially  
20 Nadia Johnson, senior policy analyst, and Julia  
21 Harris, finance analyst. I just want to thank my  
22 chief of staff, Anna Scafe, and my policy director,  
23 Vanessa Ogle, and just before I turn it over to my  
24 chairs, this is a very important hearing, very  
25 important topics that we need to delve deeper in.

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2 Particularly I appreciate the push for more scratch,  
3 from-scratch cooking in our schools and we're going  
4 to hear about that today from the DOE. I just want  
5 to kind of give context here that we need a lot more  
6 resources into our school system to make sure that  
7 our schools have the infrastructure to do just that.  
8 In my district just recently I invested over 3  
9 million dollar, with the help of the Speaker, into a  
10 state-of-the-art culinary kitchen at John Dewey High  
11 School, where children are actually preparing meals  
12 from scratch, serving lunch and meals to their entire  
13 school community. We need this investment happening  
14 across the board. Every school should have that  
15 opportunity. So we need help from Albany and from  
16 the city to get that done. Now I'll turn it over to  
17 my colleague, Chair Levin, for his opening remarks.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
19 Chair Treyger. Good morning, or good afternoon,  
20 everybody, and welcome to this hearing. The City  
21 Council's Committee on General Welfare, which is  
22 being held jointly with the Committee on Economic  
23 Development and Committee on Education. I want to  
24 thank my colleagues, Chairs Vallone and Treyger, for  
25 their leadership and partnership on these issues and

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2 holding this hearing today. Today the committee, the  
3 committees, will be hearing a series of bills related  
4 to food governance, hunger, food waste, school food,  
5 and nutrition education, equitable access to healthy  
6 food, and urban agriculture. Every year the  
7 Committee on General Welfare holds an annual hearing  
8 on hunger in order to highlight the essential work of  
9 organizations in the city that help to ensure that  
10 New Yorkers have access to healthy and nutritious  
11 food, in addition to assessing how we can improve  
12 access and address inequities in hunger and food  
13 insecurity in the city. Today's hearing and the  
14 proposed bills will help to extend this conversation  
15 further and make critical strides, not only on  
16 hunger, but also on the much-needed improvements to  
17 the city's practices on planning, distribution, and  
18 data collection related to food. The bills proposed  
19 today seek to facilitate greater integration of urban  
20 agriculture and food systems into the fight against  
21 hunger and inequity. Despite strides such as the  
22 rate of food insecurity in New York City being on the  
23 decline, an estimated one million New Yorkers remain  
24 food insecure. And the persistence of the meal gap,  
25 which refers to the number of missed meals from

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2 insufficient resources, is absolutely staggering.  
3 Food waste and system inefficiencies underscore the  
4 need for creating a comprehensive and integrated plan  
5 with an average of 8.7 pounds of food wasted by New  
6 York City households every week. Addressing these  
7 individual institutional and agency-wide inadequacies  
8 will help to ensure that there is improved access,  
9 equity, and security in food for all New Yorkers. As  
10 we have heard directly from students in prior council  
11 hearings, hunger and food insecurity persist among  
12 college students in New York City. Many colleges and  
13 universities in New York City have emergency food  
14 pantries, but we know that the need is much greater  
15 than what is being provided. Many SNAP recipients  
16 may not be able to prepare meals for themselves, or  
17 may not have adequate facilities to do, such as New  
18 Yorkers living in shelter, which at this point is  
19 over 60,000 people and over 20,000 children. The  
20 utilization and effectiveness of SNAP could also be  
21 improved if recipients were able to use their  
22 benefits to purchase a hot or prepared meal. The  
23 Committee on General Welfare has two bills being  
24 heard today, Resolution 1024 and Resolution 1025,  
25 calling on the state to expand eligibility for SNAP

2 to college students and to opt into the restaurant  
3 meals program to allow the disabled, elderly, and  
4 homeless SNAP recipients to utilize their benefits  
5 for hot meals and prepared foods at participating  
6 stores, delis, and restaurants, respectively. Just  
7 as a, I want to thank Council Member Louis for  
8 sponsoring these resolutions and, and just to provide  
9 some context, there are thousands and thousands of  
10 children that are residing in our city shelter  
11 system. Many of those are in hotels. These hotel  
12 rooms are maybe 150 square feet. There is no cooking  
13 facility for these families, in addition to there  
14 being no recreation facilities or other opportunities  
15 for children that are there, and the average length  
16 of stay is over 400 days. Over 400 days. So  
17 children increasingly are spending years of their  
18 lives without access to healthy food. And the  
19 prepared food that is provided is woefully  
20 inadequate, and that has such an impact on these  
21 children's lives, that we should be doing whatever we  
22 can at the city level to ensure that they have some  
23 stability and some ability to be normal when it comes  
24 to having access to food on a regular basis that can  
25 be healthy, that could be similar to what we all have

2 access to every day, and so I think it's really  
3 important that we look at this issue, particularly  
4 for children that are residing in the homeless  
5 shelter system. Back to my prepared remarks. I also  
6 look forward to discussing ways that we can improve  
7 and expand access to the DOE's summer meals program.  
8 Meeting people where they are is a critical component  
9 of addressing hunger and combating stigma around  
10 public benefits programs. The summer meals program  
11 has the ability to feed every hunger, hungry child in  
12 the city. Going to parks, homeless shelters,  
13 schools, and reaching people with mobile food trucks,  
14 a model that I am proud to support. However, in 2017  
15 the summer meals program only reached one in three  
16 low-income children across the city. We need to do  
17 better. I want to thank all of the advocates that  
18 are here today and all the people that are working at  
19 making sure that we can effectively provide  
20 nutritious food to New Yorkers, and I want to thank  
21 all of you for the work that you are doing, and I  
22 want to thank all of you for joining us today, and I  
23 look forward to hearing from you all on these  
24 critical issues and how the city can improve. I'd  
25 like to thank my staff, Jonathan Bouchet and

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2 Elizabeth Adams, my legislative director, as well as  
3 committee staff Amita Kilowan, senior counsel,  
4 Crystal Pond, senior policy analyst, Natalie Omery,  
5 policy analyst, who is new to our team, welcome  
6 Natalie, and Julia Haramis, our finance analyst. And  
7 with that I'll turn it back over to our Chair, Paul  
8 Vallone.

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you to the  
10 co-chairs. As everyone can see, today is going to be  
11 a filled and exciting day for developing some new  
12 guidelines for healthy food initiatives in the City  
13 of New York. We have also been joined by Council  
14 Members Eugene, Powers, Salamanca, and Koo. Just so  
15 you, there is a uniqueness to today's, based on the  
16 amount of legislation, the amount of panels that are  
17 already here, and we also have some student and  
18 children. So what I'd like to do for the kids who  
19 have showed up, just know that after the very first  
20 panel that speaks you will be the first panel to come  
21 up, because we want to get you back home and safe and  
22 sound. So after that. So with that I'd like to  
23 swear in our first panel. Can you please raise your  
24 right hand? Do you swear or affirm to tell the  
25 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in

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2 your testimony and respond honestly to the council  
3 members' questions?

4 UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

5 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you very  
6 much. You may start your testimony.

7 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Good afternoon,  
8 Chairpersons Vallone, Levin, and Treyger, and members  
9 of the Committees on Economic Development, General  
10 Welfare, and Education. My name is Dr. Erin McDonald  
11 and I am the chief strategy and innovation officer  
12 for human services in the Office of the Deputy Mayor  
13 for Health and Human Services, and I am also  
14 representing the Mayor's Office of Food Policy. I am  
15 joined at the table by Kim Kessler, assistant  
16 commissioner of the Bureau of Chronic Disease  
17 Prevention at the New York City Department of Health  
18 and Mental Hygiene. I am also joined today by  
19 representatives from DOE, HRA, EDC, Parks, DEP, DSNY,  
20 DFIA, and the Mayor's Office of Sustainability. The  
21 number of agencies here today demonstrates the  
22 complexity of the issue of food equity and the  
23 resources the city is harnessing to holistically  
24 address this expanding and interconnected issue.  
25 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the

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2 administration's commitment to increase access to  
3 nutritious and affordable food throughout the city.  
4 Before I begin, I would like to thank Speaker Johnson  
5 for his leadership on this vital issue and the  
6 valuable thinking presented in the council's growing  
7 food equity report. I appreciate the council's  
8 efforts to improve access to healthy food for all New  
9 York City communities and to underscore the  
10 connection of food to our broader food production  
11 system and the environment. We appreciate your  
12 acknowledging through the report and proposed bills  
13 the value in expanding a number of the city's food  
14 equity programs and policies. Food equity is  
15 critical to making New York City the fairest big city  
16 in the nation. During my testimony, I will begin by  
17 framing the importance of food equity in New York and  
18 then highlight critical initiatives that this  
19 administration with support from City Council has  
20 already set into motion as well as review the bills  
21 the council is hearing today. Access to food is a  
22 fundamental human right and it is our responsibility  
23 as a city to ensure that all residents have the  
24 ability and opportunity to access nutritious,  
25 affordable food through the systems and resources we

2 deliver. While many factors, including national and  
3 even international dynamics affect our local food  
4 system, we are committed at the local level to help  
5 all New Yorkers take full advantage of food that  
6 promote sustenance, health, and economic stability.  
7 We recognize that food inequity is symptomatic of the  
8 ever-increasing cost of living in New York City. As  
9 housing, food, and transportation costs rise, it is  
10 difficult for low-income New Yorkers to feed  
11 themselves and their families. Over 1.2 million New  
12 Yorkers are food insecure. This number continued to  
13 decline since 2013. However, 18% of all children,  
14 almost 9% of working adults, and almost 11% of  
15 seniors remain food insecure. Moreover, we know that  
16 further disparities exist when we consider race and  
17 ethnicity as more than twice as many black and Latino  
18 report eating no fruits or vegetables in the past day  
19 compared to white New Yorkers. Nutritious food is  
20 also often more expensive and concentrated in higher-  
21 income neighborhoods. Not only do these  
22 circumstances often result in food inequity, but they  
23 can also have drastic effects on health and  
24 productivity. There is mounting scientific evidence  
25 that health outcomes are directly tied to access to

2 adequate nutritious food. The administration  
3 understands the gravity of these statistics and the  
4 real New Yorkers behind these numbers. This is why  
5 we have spearhead a comprehensive approach to  
6 addressing food inequity in New York City,  
7 emphasizing prioritizing the needs of our most  
8 vulnerable residents. Today New York City is a  
9 leader in developing and implementing strategies to  
10 promote healthier diets, including programming to  
11 promote fruit and vegetable access across multiple  
12 settings and to expand the reuse of food. I will  
13 highlight a few investments that demonstrate our  
14 commitment to an equitable food system. An equitable  
15 food system develops rigorous standards for guiding  
16 food service practice and accessibility across city  
17 agencies. New York City was the first major city in  
18 the country to set nutrition standards for all food  
19 purchased or served by the city. The food standards  
20 were created with the goal of improving the health of  
21 all New Yorkers served by city agencies by decreasing  
22 the risk of chronic disease related to poor  
23 nutritious intake. The standards have been  
24 strengthened through investments by this  
25 administration and today the standards apply to

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2 approximately 238 million meals and snacks per year  
3 that are served in places such as schools, senior  
4 centers, homeless shelters, childcare centers, after-  
5 school programs, correctional facilities, public  
6 hospitals, and parks. Promoting access to healthy  
7 food options in an equitable food system is an  
8 important role for government. With support from  
9 City Council as well as city agencies over many years  
10 in conjunction with farmer market operators, farmer  
11 markets have expanded in New York City and we have  
12 now over 130 markets. New York City's Health Bucks  
13 program provides two-dollar coupons that can be used  
14 to purchase produce at farmer markets. It is the  
15 largest city-run farmer market initiative program in  
16 the nation and in a CDC-funded program evaluation  
17 over 70% of Health Bucks users reported that they buy  
18 more at farmer markets because of Health Bucks. In  
19 2017 alone over half a million Health Bucks,  
20 equalling more than one million dollar in fruits and  
21 vegetables, were distributed, putting fresh, locally  
22 grown produce into the hands of thousands of low-  
23 income New Yorkers. Insufficient money to make ends  
24 meet is an underlying root cause of food inequity.  
25 The city has made important strides over the last six

2 years to address income inequality through benefits  
3 access in dignified ways. One key focus has been  
4 increasing access to benefits, ensuring that they are  
5 client-centered and provide maximum economic  
6 resources. HRA is actively continuing their efforts  
7 to enroll low-income New Yorkers by reaching out to  
8 New York City's university of direct service  
9 providers to familiarize them with the user-friendly  
10 features of Access HRA and develop partnerships with  
11 many sites that utilizing the Access HRA provider  
12 portal, an online tool designed for CBOs to connect  
13 with the clients they service. Introducing more  
14 client-friendly technology solutions speaks to our  
15 value of ensuring low-income New Yorkers are able to  
16 receive critical benefits while meeting them where  
17 they are. The investment has demonstrated  
18 significant results that result, that reflect a  
19 changed client experience. For example, the percent  
20 of SNAP applications submitted online increased from  
21 23% in 2013 to 87% in 2018 and the percent of SNAP  
22 application interviews conducted by phone increased  
23 from 29% in 2013 to 93% in 2018. We need to develop  
24 a food system that maximizes food as a resource for  
25 humans and after it becomes waste as compost for

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2 healthy soils. Our goal to send zero waste to  
3 landfill is an essential element of creating a  
4 circular food economy. Diverting organic material  
5 from the landfill is essential to cutting greenhouse  
6 gas emissions from the waste sector and allows the  
7 city to produce and distribute compost for urban  
8 gardens and parks and regional farmland resilience.  
9 While we continue to invest significant effort to  
10 improve our food system, more can always be done and  
11 we applaud the council for drawing attention to the  
12 efforts that will spur greater food equity. The  
13 three bills regarding food governance demonstrate the  
14 important role of food policy to the city and the  
15 convening power to bring stakeholders together to  
16 build a unified approach. Introduce 1666, from  
17 Council Member Kallos, amends the New York City  
18 Council to establish an Office of Food Policy. The  
19 administration has a long-standing commitment to the  
20 existing Mayor's Office of Food Policy, created  
21 through Executive Order 122, established in 2008.  
22 Incorporating the office into the City Council  
23 further elevates the importance of the work and the  
24 work currently under way. We support the bill and  
25 look forward to discussing the details with council.

2 Intro 1664 by Council Member Gibson requires the  
3 Office of Food Policy to formulate a 10-year food  
4 policy plan. We support the bill and currently have  
5 work in progress to format a plan guided by an equity  
6 framework that considers the many dimensions of  
7 achieving food equity through partnership, bold  
8 ideas, and innovation. We look forward to  
9 collaborating with the council on the bill. Intro  
10 1680 by Council Member Vallone, requires an expansion  
11 of the food metrics report. The current report  
12 provides a strong overview of the production,  
13 processing, distribution, and consumption of food  
14 provided by city agencies to the communities we  
15 serve. We agree that there is an opportunity to  
16 expand the data included in analysis and support the  
17 bill. On the issue of hunger, two bills speak to  
18 expanding the valuable ongoing efforts across the  
19 city to ensure vulnerable populations have access to  
20 information and resources that support healthy food  
21 consumption. Intro 1659 by Council Member Chin  
22 directs the city to identify and enroll seniors  
23 eligible for supplemental nutrition assistance  
24 benefits. The city is proud of our work to ensure  
25 vulnerable seniors are connected to benefits. SNAP-

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2 eligible seniors participate in SNAP at a far higher  
3 rate in New York City as compared to the nation as a  
4 whole. HRA currently has a senior participation rate  
5 of close to 73%, compared to the 45% national rate  
6 released by USDA. While we share the council's  
7 intention to continue to increase SNAP enrollment  
8 among seniors, we have facilitated strong senior  
9 enrollment under the city's current strategies and  
10 believe the intent of the bill may be achieved  
11 through other outreach channels. We look forward to  
12 partnering with council to discuss the details and  
13 implications of federal policies on senior SNAP  
14 eligibility. Intro 1650 by Council Member Adams asks  
15 the city to provide additional information about the  
16 Health Bucks program to social service recipients.  
17 We support the intent of the legislation and look  
18 forward to working with the sponsor to ensure the  
19 most effective means to share information about the  
20 Health Bucks programs and farmer markets with  
21 applicants and recipients of SNAP benefits. We  
22 welcome the opportunity to build up the strong track  
23 record and commend council members who have met  
24 constituent demand by purchasing Health Bucks for  
25 their districts. I would like to pause and highlight

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2 an important federal rule change that will have  
3 significant impact on the two food access bills  
4 discussed. Earlier this year the United States  
5 Department of Agriculture issued a proposed rule for  
6 broad-based categorical eligibility, revision of  
7 categorical eligibility in the Supplemental Nutrition  
8 Assistance Program. The proposed rule would  
9 dramatically change the long-standing rules for SNAP  
10 eligibility in such a way that will increase food  
11 insecure for working-class families and vulnerable  
12 populations and vulnerable populations and negatively  
13 impact the public health, while imposing additional  
14 administrative and fiscal burdens on state and local  
15 governments. The proposed changes would eliminate  
16 current state flexibility. The administration will  
17 be submitting comments strongly objecting to this  
18 proposed rule. Comments for any party wishing to  
19 submit are due September 23. To continue to improve  
20 access to healthy food among New York City's  
21 youngster residents, two bills are produce to enhance  
22 resources that support children to thrive. Intro  
23 1675 by Council Member Rose requires the city to take  
24 additional steps to distribute information regarding  
25 summer meals. The city and Department of Education

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2 support this bill, but we have concerns about  
3 effectively operationalizing the proposal. Do we  
4 support sending home information in children's  
5 backpacks, emails, or robocalls? Intro 1676 from  
6 Council Member Rosenthal requires the city to report  
7 on implementing scratch cooking in school food  
8 service. The DOE is currently piloting scratch-  
9 cooked food in five schools and this year will expand  
10 the pilot to two additional schools. DOE looks  
11 forward to sharing the pilot findings with the  
12 council at the end of the school year. While the  
13 city supports the intent of the bill, large-scale  
14 expansion of scratch cooking would require  
15 significant capital investment. Access to healthy  
16 food across the city agencies is a foundational  
17 element to the city's current food policy priorities.  
18 Intro 1660 from Council Member Cohen would require  
19 the city to create a good food purchasing program.  
20 The city appreciates the intent of the bill and that  
21 the council, and wants to make sure the council is  
22 aware of the significant efforts already under way by  
23 numerous city agencies to implement good food  
24 purchasing. We believe that the work currently under  
25 way represents a strong approach that supports

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2 agencies' efforts to integrate good food purchasing  
3 programs on a long-term basis. However, we have  
4 concerns regarding the details of the advisory board  
5 and look forward to discussions with the council on  
6 how we can clarify and refine that role. Intro 1654  
7 by Council Member Ayala would require the health  
8 department to develop a health, a neighborhood-  
9 specific awareness campaign regarding farm to city  
10 projects available throughout all five boroughs. The  
11 city supports this bill, as we agree that it is  
12 important and useful to make localized information on  
13 farm to city projects available to New Yorkers. We  
14 welcome the opportunity to build upon our existing  
15 actions and further expand the use of farmer markets  
16 and other local food resources. On the issue of  
17 urban agriculture, three bills speak to expanding the  
18 city resources that direct solutions for urban  
19 agriculture and understanding the issue of community  
20 garden spaces. Intro 1663 by Council Member Espinal  
21 requires the establishment of an Office of Urban  
22 Agriculture and an urban agriculture advisory board.  
23 We support efforts to coordinate, plan, and to tap  
24 into the expertise of the urban agriculture community  
25 through an advisory board. However, we believe that

2 the work can be accommodated in the existing  
3 portfolio of the Mayor's Office of Sustainability and  
4 recommend against creating a separate and specific  
5 office. Introduce 1652 from Council Member Ampry-  
6 Samuel would require the Department of City Planning  
7 to categorize city-owned community gardens as open  
8 space in the primary land use tax law and output  
9 dataset. We support the goal of the bill and share  
10 the council's desire to provide more information to  
11 the community, but we do have some specific practical  
12 considerations about data infrastructure and  
13 integrity and any changes will take time to  
14 implement. Intro 1653 by Council Member Ampry-Samuel  
15 would require the Parks Department to collect and  
16 report data regarding community gardens and  
17 permitting the operation of farmer markets and the  
18 sale of produce within community gardens. While food  
19 production in community gardens is important, it is  
20 just one of multiple potential benefits our spaces  
21 provide. We trust our green thumb gardeners to know  
22 what is best for their communities. We are concerned  
23 about the underlying consequences of introducing  
24 large-scale commercial food sale in community  
25 gardens. Finally, Intro 1673 and 1681 would require

2 covered city agencies and the Department of Education  
3 to submit food waste reduction plans and school food  
4 waste prevention plans, respectively, to the  
5 Department of Sanitation for review. Efforts to  
6 minimize food waste and loss raise awareness of food  
7 waste and facilitate food recovery that helps promote  
8 nutrition, nutritious food for New York families and  
9 individuals that need it, saves consumers and  
10 businesses money, and reduces our overall carbon  
11 footprint. We share the goals of the proposed  
12 legislation and welcome further opportunities to  
13 discuss with the council ways to enhance our  
14 comprehensive food waste strategy and clarify some of  
15 the assumptions underlying the bill. Central to our  
16 conversation today is the principle that creating a  
17 strong and equitable food system supports the long-  
18 term health and well-being of individuals and the  
19 city as a whole. The act of breaking bread plays a  
20 central role and not sustenance alone, but in  
21 building community and identity. Our vision is that  
22 New York City becomes a network of communities where  
23 everyone can reach their full potential, in part due  
24 to their access to healthy and affordable food  
25 regardless of where they live in the city, their

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2 income level, age, gender identity, or race and  
3 ethnicity. With the shared goal of greater food  
4 equity we look forward to working with council to  
5 strengthen the existing initiatives while developing  
6 bold new policies. Thank you for the opportunity to  
7 testify. We are happy to answer your questions.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you. We are,  
9 first off, let me say, can commend my fellow council  
10 members. This package of legislation you have all  
11 put together and passionately fought for years is  
12 unbelievable. It really is. There is not a bill  
13 that is before us today, especially in hearing your  
14 testimony, there really wasn't too much opposition on  
15 the city's side. It's just a matter of working these  
16 things out and creating a new future of food in New  
17 York City. So this is an exciting day. And with all  
18 that excitement has brought over 10 panels, over a  
19 dozen city agencies, and many people who need to  
20 speak, and a lot of council members. So I will be  
21 prudent with the clock with three minutes for  
22 everyone and whether you choose to speak about your  
23 legislation or questions, and I'd like to just start  
24 off by saying you mentioned, you mentioned state and  
25 federal, and obviously we get trumped on certain

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2 things whether going through federal or state, and on  
3 the federal end some change to the SNAP. Maybe you  
4 could just flush that out. You said there's a  
5 federal rule change that will have significant impact  
6 on two food access bills and a revision of the  
7 categorical eligibility in the Supplemental Nutrition  
8 Assistance Program, otherwise known as SNAP.

9 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Um-hmm.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Can you explain  
11 that a little more?

12 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Absolutely. So my  
13 colleagues from HRA that are spearheading the comment  
14 that will go into the federal government, I'm going  
15 to ask them to come up and provide the details to  
16 make sure that you have full clarity.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Which is a good  
18 prelude for those in audience, probably the first  
19 three rows are all city agencies.

20 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: That is right.

21 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So at any point  
22 whoever is going to tackle the question, feel free to  
23 come on up. Just state your name for the record.

24 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: We have Jill Berry,  
25 who is going to answer. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Remember everyone's  
3 under a continued oath.

4 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Yes.

5 JILL BERRY: Good afternoon, and thank you  
6 for the question. We at HRA are very...

7 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: State your name for  
8 the record, so we don't...

9 JILL BERRY: Jill Berry.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thanks, Jill.

11 JILL BERRY: We at HRA are very concerned  
12 about these proposed rule changes. The proposal to  
13 the broad-based categorical eligibility could result  
14 in over 80,000 New Yorkers on SNAP losing their SNAP  
15 benefits.

16 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Completely losing?

17 JILL BERRY: Completely losing. Just by  
18 changing the income eligibility.

19 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: From what to what?  
20 Do we know? We'll get that, we'll get...

21 JILL BERRY: Yeah, we can get back to  
22 you with the, with the specifics on that.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: The timeline on  
24 that would be?

25

2 JILL BERRY: Right now it's a proposed  
3 rule change. We are submitting our comments. As a  
4 city we are encouraging others to submit comments in  
5 opposition to this rule change also. We also know  
6 that about 38,000 New York State children could lose  
7 free school meals as a result of this because their  
8 families will have lost SNAP eligibility.

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Are we starting any  
10 alternative plans in case this go through?

11 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: We are...

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: We're going to have  
13 to coordinate.

14 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Yeah, we, I think  
15 that that is a really important question and we are,  
16 um, we'd like to make sure that we're providing  
17 insight about the many different ways that many  
18 agencies would be coming together in the case if that  
19 was a solution we needed to put in place and we're  
20 happy to provide details on that and follow up.

21 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Here we are talking  
22 about going forward and here's a change that's going  
23 to bring us back into the dark ages, so that's the  
24 last thing we need.

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2 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: That's right. It's  
3 critically important.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So we have to all  
5 advocate together on that.

6 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Yes, agreed.

7 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So with some of the  
8 things that just hearing the good progress that we're  
9 going to make and is being made, some of the things  
10 that the city and council have already done is put  
11 like a letter grading system or additional  
12 requirements on vendors and those who are going to  
13 work within the city. And I was thinking maybe we  
14 could develop some type of good food certification  
15 program so that a good operator, business provider,  
16 grower who meets those five standards could now, as a  
17 consumer I would rather frequent that place of  
18 business or I'd like to purchase those goods for my,  
19 for my students, for my businesses, for my civic  
20 groups, for my seniors, for everyone who needs that  
21 type of food. Maybe we could consider even doing  
22 that. So that's another level or layer of a good  
23 performer. Think some thoughts on that.

24 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Um-hmm, I'm smiling.

25 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Smiling is good.

2 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Smiling is good, but  
3 I'm smiling because, um, I really appreciate where  
4 your head is thinking about the different ways that  
5 we can really leverage the value of good food  
6 purchasing. New York City and the city agencies  
7 stepping up and in and being core leaders in that  
8 work, because we are a very clear buying power, um,  
9 in New York City, in New York State, and the nation  
10 around the food that we serve all people that we  
11 support on a daily basis, but I would love to really  
12 think about the ways that we could leverage the  
13 framework and think about bringing other partners for  
14 businesses, for other producers and partners in the  
15 city that that would equally want to step in and  
16 aspire to those really important principles. So we  
17 would absolute, I would love to follow up on that  
18 conversation.

19 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I don't think  
20 you'll get any opposition to anyone up here on that,  
21 so I think that would be great. Which brings us to  
22 EDC, the representative from EDC if you could come on  
23 up, just to see if, where your thoughts are on that,  
24 and I would probably go through something along your  
25 requirements that maybe in doing business with future

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2 partners within the city and where your thoughts are  
3 on some of these bills today.

4 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Great, and we have  
5 Jenny Osmond, who leads our fresh program at EDC. So  
6 she can absolutely provide a lens to that and happy  
7 to follow up with broader points.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Good to see you,  
9 Jenny.

10 JENNY OSMOND: Maybe this off? No, it's  
11 on.

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So you're good.

13 JENNY OSMOND: Yes, hi, Jenny. Um, so  
14 this is a question as it pertains to the various  
15 bills?

16 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I guess thoughts,  
17 yeah, on today, just as you see some of the city  
18 agencies will be telling us whether they support or  
19 have concerns or would, would not stand with us. I'd  
20 just like to hear from EDC, since I'm chair of the  
21 committee, some of your thoughts on the bills that  
22 are in front of us today, if you support them and if  
23 you have any additional comments.

24 JENNY OSMOND: Sure. Ah, thank you for  
25 the question. So as I know you are well aware EDC's

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2 mission is to create shared prosperity across the  
3 five boroughs by strengthening neighborhoods and  
4 growing good jobs. I personally am the director of  
5 the Fresh program, which is the food retail expansion  
6 to support health program which confers tax  
7 incentives to support the development and retention  
8 of supermarkets in what are considered high, highly  
9 distressed areas of the five boroughs.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: We had a separate  
11 hearing just on that topic.

12 JENNY OSMOND: I remember it [laughs]

13 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Trying to bring  
14 that to the NYCHA, trying to bring that a NYCHA  
15 resident.

16 JENNY OSMOND: Yes. So through Fresh the  
17 EDC has supported the expansion of healthy food  
18 access over the past 10 years, since the program was  
19 originally conceived. All supermarkets receiving  
20 benefits through the Fresh program are required to  
21 accept SNAP and required to have 500 square feet  
22 dedicated to fresh produce, at the very least, and at  
23 least 30% of their offerings must be perishable. So  
24 the EDC in its mission to support shared prosperity  
25 absolutely supports the intent of these bills.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So then maybe that  
3 food certification program might be something that we  
4 could work on together, too, so we can expand that.  
5 Seems to be an exciting possibility. Um, we've also  
6 been joined, with the many council members who've  
7 jumped in already, we have Council Members Levin,  
8 Kallos, Rosenthal, Maisel, Ulrich, Torres, and  
9 Reynoso have also joined us. On the questions list  
10 we have Louis, Gibson, and Grodenchik at the moment.  
11 With regard to the food metrics report, since all  
12 three of you are there, what are your thoughts on  
13 producing the annual food metrics report?

14 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: In its current form,  
15 or in the, um...

16 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And hopefully the  
17 expanded form.

18 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Yeah, I appreciate  
19 the question. Um, so as a data, um, nerd...

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: That we are.

21 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: I would, you know,  
22 qualify myself as, I appreciate the desire to really  
23 think about the way that we can better leverage that  
24 report. Um, the, the current report does a solid job  
25 in responding to the original mandate for

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2 understanding, um, increasing amounts of data that  
3 the city and the city agencies can bring to bear to  
4 understand the way that we're procuring and using and  
5 serving food.

6 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So that's a cross  
7 responsibility from all the agencies that are here?

8 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: That is, that is  
9 right.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And that data is  
11 coming to you?

12 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: I'm sorry?

13 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: That data is coming  
14 to your office?

15 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: That is correct. So  
16 the way that the process works at a high level, all  
17 of the agencies that are procuring and serving food  
18 to different communities or populations that we're  
19 serving through programs, they are, they commit, or  
20 they're overseen by the food standards, so we work in  
21 partnership with the Department of Health to collect  
22 that information on an annual basis to make sure that  
23 they're in compliance, to understand the details of  
24 the way that that work is, is happening. We also  
25 provide a lot of other information, some of which is

2 qualitative, to understand or to describe the ways  
3 that food is available through our city agencies, and  
4 that's the, kind of the mechanism overall that  
5 happens. So that is pulled through the Department of  
6 Health , it comes to the Mayor's Office of Food  
7 Policy, we develop it in partnership.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So in that  
9 reporting guide, do you see any changes that could  
10 make that system a little more better?

11 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Yes. Um, I am  
12 looking forward to partnering with you and City  
13 Council on that effort. We actually have, as I  
14 mentioned in my testimony, have work underway to  
15 think about even starting, um, you know, moving  
16 forward how we will be really leveraging a) the data  
17 that is currently available, how we pushing further  
18 into the indicators that we current as well as  
19 increasingly know as a city and also including a  
20 broader set of, of indicators to understand that. I  
21 think that there's also a lot of opportunity to  
22 really make the data more available and flexible so  
23 that, um, the public, stakeholders, council, um,  
24 other partners can really leverage that information.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: That would be the  
3 next step. I think, is there a thought to an online  
4 portal, something that can be accessed by everyone  
5 and anyone that's here and can see what's happening  
6 in their specific community or demographic area, or  
7 area of concern so that we can really grow that?

8 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: We have, as you I'm  
9 sure are well aware, a huge amount of resource around  
10 data access in the city and we're, um, we're really  
11 looking forward to looking at how we can integrate  
12 the food metrics data into that, those different  
13 resources, yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I think every  
15 council member's always second or third question is  
16 interagency coordination with all that. So I'm happy  
17 that the agencies are here and we're all on board  
18 with that.

19 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: That's our first  
21 round of questions, and I'd like to give the co-  
22 chairs a chance to ask their questions before we turn  
23 it over to the council members. So Council Member  
24 Mark Treyger.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you, Chair  
3 Vallone. My questions will understandably be more  
4 kind of DOE-focused, but still have, you know,  
5 broader implications. Do we have data with us here  
6 how many schools currently have cooking kitchens that  
7 could be used to prepare scratch-cooked meals without  
8 any renovations?

9 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Thank you, Council  
10 Member. I'm going to ask my colleagues from DOE to  
11 come up. And they are here to share more information  
12 on that topic.

13 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I guess we'll have  
14 to get them sworn in. Do you swear to tell the  
15 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth and  
16 honestly answer today's council member questions?

17 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Yes I do.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Just  
19 state your name for the record.

20 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Christopher  
21 Jacarakow Dewey.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: All right, great.  
23 Thank you, thank you Chris.

24 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Thank you,  
25 Council Member, for the question. We're currently in

2 five schools that, as was mentioned in Erin's report.  
3 Um, we are also looking into all of our kitchens to  
4 see which kitchens can actually handle scratch  
5 cooking. As you know, most of our kitchens were not  
6 built for scratch, so it's going to take a  
7 significant increase in funds for us to be able to  
8 create scratch kitchens.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So I appreciate the  
10 candid answer, Chris. But just to be clear, you said  
11 five schools, is that correct?

12 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: To date we  
13 are in five schools and this year we plan on  
14 expanding to two more schools. We're learning a lot  
15 from this pilot. Ah, the DOE initiated this pilot  
16 last year and we, ah, learned from the pilot and we  
17 actually this year have also created menu items that  
18 have gone citywide, not just in our scratch kitchens,  
19 that came from the scratch kitchens, so we're proud  
20 of that and we're proud to continue to learn from  
21 scratch kitchens and enhance our menus across the  
22 board.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, Chris, you  
24 could add John Dewey High School to the list, because  
25 we've added a scratch culture state of the art

2 kitchen to that. But that was with investments we  
3 made locally. We need, of course, more, more  
4 investments. You might have touched upon this, this  
5 next question, but there are some parts I'd like an  
6 answer to. How many schools would need kitchen  
7 retrofits? I think you said you're assessing to see  
8 how much more you could expand to provide scratch-  
9 cooked menus, and what is the average cost of such a  
10 renovation?

11                   CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: So there  
12 are certain requirements in kitchens in that are  
13 needed, including an ANSUL system, additional  
14 equipment, and adequate space. That is what we are  
15 looking into right now. We don't have a cost at this  
16 moment. We can get back to you at a later date as we  
17 continue to inventory our kitchens, but those  
18 specific requirements are needed, and again our  
19 kitchens were not built with that in mind, but as we  
20 do go around them we're placing new scratch kitchens  
21 in our schools, such as the two we're doing this  
22 year. We're looking for those kitchens so we don't  
23 have to add the additional equipment when we roll  
24 this out.

2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, I mean, in  
3 the case of John Dewey it cost almost about 3 million  
4 dollars, but it was really state of the art. It's  
5 like a Food Network kitchen, which I'm very proud of.  
6 Each school might have its unique type of design.  
7 But this is critically important because my students,  
8 my family is from Coney Island, southern Brooklyn,  
9 did not have the opportunity for a number of years,  
10 and, you know, I'm happy that we're adding it there,  
11 but we need it across the board. An estimate would  
12 be helpful to us because this morning, Chris, you and  
13 I were at a breakfast with the chancellor and city  
14 and state lawmakers and a number of folks have  
15 questions about, about school food and other things.  
16 Folks, when we say that Albany owes New York City  
17 schools over 1.2 billion dollars, this is a part of  
18 the equation, this is part of the conversation. It  
19 takes money to get this done. This is, of course, a  
20 critical issue. But the under, the chronic  
21 underfunding of public schools, particularly in  
22 communities of color, particularly marginalized  
23 communities in New York City, this is what we're  
24 talking about here. We can't afford to get students,  
25 give students the types of infrastructure and

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2 cafeterias and kitchens and nutritious meals that  
3 they deserve. So this is really at the heart of our  
4 conversation. Now, also, in terms of making the  
5 space even more inviting, in addition to making it  
6 more appealing to your palate, but also just  
7 inviting, how many school kitchens currently lack air  
8 conditioning?

9                   CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: It's a  
10 great question.

11                  CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: It is a great  
12 question.

13                  CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: I do know  
14 that...

15                  CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Asked by a former  
16 teacher, yes.

17                  CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Agreed.  
18 Um, we are working with the chancellor, as you heard  
19 this morning, to air condition all classrooms and we  
20 do not have many kitchens that are air conditioned.  
21 There have been requests made across the board. One,  
22 I'd like to go back to something previously you said.  
23 I'd like to thank you for the Dewey renovations and  
24 we hope to continue to partner with the council on  
25 projects like this. All the food we do serve in all

2 of our kitchens meets all the nutritious guidelines.  
3 We exceed the USDA guidelines. So I just want to  
4 make sure that people do understand and know that all  
5 of our food from scratch and in our regular kitchens  
6 does meet all the nutritional standards. Going back  
7 to the air conditioned question, um, that's something  
8 else I'd like to be able to get to you but it is a  
9 larger number that we need to put air conditioners in  
10 kitchens and we'd like to partner with the council  
11 and other partners across the city to be able to go  
12 about achieving this goal.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, because I  
14 remind people that human beings work there.  
15 Children, of course, eat in the cafeterias, but human  
16 beings work there every day. The cafeteria workers  
17 in our school system are amazing people. They need  
18 to breathe and it is hot in very hot spaces, and if  
19 they open the window to get air and a fly comes in,  
20 some other agency will criticize them for having a  
21 fly in the kitchen. Well, they need to have air. So  
22 this is a part of the ventilation conversation and  
23 having air conditioning, and it's very hot in these  
24 spaces. Now we pushed the mayor and the  
25 administration to air conditioning in all classrooms

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2 and it's still, I think, on track to do that at some  
3 point, hopefully soon. But we need to also air  
4 condition the common spaces, the cafeterias, the  
5 kitchens, the libraries, the auditoriums. That is  
6 something that the council will continue to push the  
7 administration on. I have some follow-up questions  
8 quickly and then I'll turn it to my co-chair. I have  
9 been also focused on the issue of scheduling. Chris,  
10 I ask this respectfully. What time do you typically  
11 have lunch?

12 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Around  
13 11:00 a.m.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Around 11 a.m.

15 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: I do report  
16 to the office kind of early...

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right.

18 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: So I'm  
19 usually hungry around 11 a.m.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I would say that's  
21 not, that's an acceptable time for lunch. Are you  
22 aware that there are children in our school system  
23 being offered lunch at 9 o'clock or 9:30 in the  
24 morning?

25

2                   CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: I do aware,  
3 I am aware that we have several schools that do serve  
4 lunch early. I know we have worked with principals  
5 and we've reached out to principals over the past  
6 year to work with solutions and find solutions and  
7 ways to reduce the number of students that are eating  
8 lunch early. But I also want to point out that the  
9 majority of the schools that are eating lunch early  
10 are also schools that start very early. The majority  
11 of our schools that start between 8:00 and 8:20 have  
12 a normal, more middle of the day as we would look  
13 from 8:00 to 4:00. Schools that do start between  
14 7:00 and 7:30 have an earlier lunch period. So it  
15 does happen in the middle of the day. The  
16 conversation at the Department of Education really  
17 has been around serving lunch towards the middle of  
18 the day. If a student starts lunch, ah, school at  
19 7:30 the middle of the day is earlier because their  
20 dismissal time is also earlier.

21                   CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, it just, and  
22 Chris, I appreciate your answer because we just  
23 passed on bill on school start time, because there  
24 are schools that start, I used to teach a class at  
25 7:30 in the morning in Brooklyn, where I had students

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2 coming in from the Bronx having to take two trains  
3 and a bus to get to school and they didn't have  
4 enough sleep and enough time to really get to school  
5 on time. So, but 9 o'clock lunch is not lunch.  
6 That's breakfast. And we need to really step it up  
7 in terms of programming and getting schools support.  
8 Schools have come back to tell me that the issue is  
9 overcrowding, the issue is when you have [inaudible]  
10 number of students, they have to trade time schedules  
11 for common spaces. We can't do this at the expense  
12 of our kids. Ah, and so 9 o'clock in the morning is  
13 not lunch, and I really would appreciate if we kind  
14 of figured out a way to support schools for bettering  
15 programming. The last line of questions I have is  
16 with regards to, um, privately raised funds for  
17 schools. Can privately raised funds, such as PTA  
18 funds, be used to supplement a school's food budget?

19 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Yes, it can  
20 in specific areas. Parents and PTAs would have to  
21 submit the money to the city and it would have to  
22 eventually make its way to the school's budget.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And does that  
24 currently happen?

25

2                   CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: In specific  
3 cases it does. I can get back to you with more  
4 information around how many schools and how often  
5 this does happen.

6                   CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I would like to  
7 know how many schools receive a supplemental budget  
8 line from privately raised funds, because what I'm  
9 hearing anecdotally is that there are certain schools  
10 that, with the ability to raise private money, that  
11 will offer their children organic milk or offer their  
12 children other types of nutritious options, and, you  
13 know, I have schools in my communities that have to  
14 have a Gofundme page just for basic items in their  
15 school community and they don't have the capacity to  
16 raise a million dollars or so to supplement their  
17 lunch. And so every school should have a robust  
18 salad bar and with vegetables, fresh fruits and  
19 vegetables and great options. But I'm hearing that  
20 that is just not the case. So I would appreciate,  
21 Chris, some data on that, how many schools are  
22 receiving supplemental funds. Because it's really an  
23 issue of equity, I think, and fairness. I will, I  
24 will pause here because I want to be mindful of my  
25 time, with a lot of bills, a lot of colleagues, a lot

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2 of folks here. So I'll now turn it over to Chair  
3 Levin.

4 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: If I may,  
5 Council Member Treyger?

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes? Yes.

7 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: I just want  
8 to put some clarity to that statement. PTAs,  
9 parents, private organizations can donate money to  
10 the city schools. But as far as donating money for  
11 food that is to be served in a lunch room we have  
12 strict guidelines on the food that we serve. We  
13 normally don't allow food to be brought into the  
14 lunch room. That's part of our program. Can  
15 parents, can teachers and others bring food in into  
16 the classroom and other areas? That is correct, but  
17 we don't allow them to bring food and we serve it  
18 from our kitchens because we have the strict  
19 guidelines we have to follow.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: No, I fully  
21 understand that. I'm just saying that some schools  
22 have the capacity to raise private funds to  
23 supplement what the DOE does, and kudos to those  
24 parents and those communities. To me, the issue is  
25 an equity issue. All children, regardless of their

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2 ZIP code should be given that same fair shot and  
3 opportunity. That's the point that I was making.

4 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Understood,  
5 and the salad bars, great topic. We're in over 1400  
6 schools, we're looking to expand. We're actually  
7 working with Council Member Kallos, I saw him here  
8 earlier before, who brought it up within his district  
9 and we have a renewed focus on looking at salad bars  
10 across the city and ideas and ways to go into more  
11 schools, and we look forward to partnering with  
12 council members in our own districts.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Salad bars, air  
14 conditioning, sounds great. All right. Turning it  
15 to Chair Levin.

16 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Before we jump with  
17 Steve and Chris while DOE is here, a couple things  
18 popped up in the beginning of the school year I just  
19 wanted to bring to your attention on the food issue.  
20 But Council Member Treyger makes a great point with  
21 equipping the schools with the tools that they can  
22 use to provide the fresh food. If a school is being  
23 built new or if it's going under a major capital  
24 renovation or an expansion can't we add the things  
25 that are missing at that point? Can't we add the

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2 scratch kitchen and the air conditioning and provide  
3 that at that point? Why do we have to stay at zero  
4 level?

5 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: It's a  
6 great question, Council Member. Our partners over at  
7 SCA are the ones that really build the schools and we  
8 partner with them to design our kitchens. Our  
9 kitchens, once again, are not built for scratch, but  
10 we did speak to SCA and SCA did confirm that we can  
11 make modifications if we were to grow the scratch  
12 program throughout the city.

13 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, yeah, I mean,  
14 anyone who is here doesn't really care which agency's  
15 responsibility it is, they just want to get it done  
16 for the students. So I would appreciate if we could  
17 do that.

18 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: We make it  
19 a priority to make sure we have our hands in the  
20 kitchen design.

21 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And the one that  
22 concerned me this morning was in my office, at least  
23 a half a dozen middle school principals are calling,  
24 just in my district, in panic on the topic of food  
25 that, ah, I have a 12-year-old and if he was fed the

2 same thing a 4-year-old there's no way Charlie would  
3 be able to deal with that while study and go through  
4 school. Apparently the children are being provided  
5 the same exact portion whether they're in pre-K or  
6 middle school, and that is completely unacceptable.  
7 I don't care if it's fresh food, regular food,  
8 whatever food we're talking about, we need to have  
9 the proper food to feed our students, so that they're  
10 crying in the classroom, going home hungry to many  
11 families that don't have that three meals, not  
12 learning correctly. There's myriad of issues, can  
13 we, do we have any guidance on that or is that  
14 something that's just temporarily happening, or  
15 before that becomes a citywide issue?

16                   CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: That's a  
17 very good concern. We do serve meals based on  
18 nutritional guidelines that we have. Salad bars are  
19 provided in the schools for students who want to go  
20 back for seconds. Salad bars are not part of...

21                   CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: But salad bars are  
22 not filling up a student for a classroom. It's a  
23 nice alternative, but you need, it's, to be exact  
24 it's three chicken pieces for all students. And  
25 three little chicken nuggets is not going to fill a

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2 12-year-old. I don't care how much salad they have.  
3 It's not going to happen. It's not going to fill me  
4 up, it's not going to fill them up. So, but we, we,  
5 really take a look at that. So while we transition  
6 to healthier menus, whatever is on the menu has to be  
7 enough.

8 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Understood,  
9 Council Member. We will definitely look into it, and  
10 as we continue to put new menu items there we will  
11 take this under consideration.

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you. Chair  
13 Levin.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
15 Chair Vallone. Um, sorry, on the topic of school  
16 food and, and the times for lunch, following up on  
17 Council Member Treyger's question. I mean, even if  
18 school starts at 7:00 or 7:30, ah, 9:00 a.m. or 9:30  
19 a.m. is hardly the middle of the day, right? I mean,  
20 it's very far towards the beginning of the day.

21 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Completely  
22 agree with you. Um, in situations where there are  
23 really early lunch times that's really more of a co-  
24 location kind of number of students through the  
25 building.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

3 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Others  
4 throughout the department, including the chancellor  
5 and I've been a principal myself, when you have a  
6 school of 4000 kids and your lunch room only has a  
7 capacity of 600, when you do the periods it obviously  
8 extends throughout the day. We are working  
9 specifically with those schools around arrangements  
10 to provide students meals throughout the day and what  
11 time they're eating. We're going to continue to work  
12 with schools, we're piloting things in schools, we're  
13 meeting with principals, we're meeting with  
14 superintendents, we're meeting with the borough  
15 officers that support those schools to work around  
16 arrangements, where we're trying not to have such  
17 early lunch periods. There are some cases there, we  
18 will continue to work with those principals around  
19 providing meals for those students at an appropriate  
20 time.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Can I ask about  
22 breakfast in the classroom?

23 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: You can.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: What is, what's the  
25 latest utilization rate? Where are we in terms of

2 the number of, as a metric the number of students  
3 that qualify for free or reduced lunch participating  
4 in school breakfast? Do you know what that number  
5 is?

6                   CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: So I'd like  
7 to thank the council for universal means, free  
8 breakfast, free lunch, you can't go wrong with that.  
9 We try to take as much publicity from that as  
10 possible and we thank you again. Um, breakfast in  
11 the classroom, we happen to be expanding this year.  
12 It's our largest roll-out. We're rolling out to an  
13 additional 150 schools. This is big for us. This is  
14 the largest roll-out, as I mentioned before. We now  
15 have a renewed focus and the background of the  
16 chancellor and the council and others, and we thank  
17 you for the 6 million dollars that you brought back  
18 for us. We are really happy about that. Um,  
19 expanding this year is going to allow us to meet the  
20 mandate of all elementary schools. We also now are  
21 inviting middle school principals and high school  
22 principals if they are interested in breakfast in the  
23 classroom. We can do that for them. We're offering  
24 that to them when we speak to the borough officers,  
25 the superintendents and the principals themselves.

2 Um, it's important to us to continue to roll out  
3 breakfast in the classroom and this year the 150 that  
4 we roll out, we expect to increase breakfast  
5 participation.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And what's the  
7 feedback? So how many, I'm sorry, how many schools  
8 do we have now in total? Or with the 150, how many  
9 we will have in total? It's [inaudible].

10 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: 700 and  
11 change.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK. What's the  
13 feedback that we're getting from those schools? Is it  
14 largely positive? I mean, every large jurisdiction in  
15 the country that's done this has had some challenges  
16 in terms of scaling up. So Los Angeles had  
17 challenges, Chicago had challenges, what are we  
18 seeing in terms of the feedback and how are we  
19 addressing it?

20 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: It's  
21 another great question.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you.

23 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Um, some of  
24 the feedback we're getting is principals are  
25 concerned with instructional time. Breakfast in the

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2 classroom, when it's brought and delivered to the  
3 classroom, we have, we work out arrangements with the  
4 UFT and the principals to make sure that that time is  
5 allocated. That's one option. Some principals will  
6 push back on that. Um, custodians and the  
7 cleanliness of the building and the breakfast that's  
8 eaten inside of the classroom and not the cafeteria  
9 can be a challenge. We're working with the  
10 custodians around that. This year I think the  
11 renewed focus that we have and what we're doing with  
12 breakfast in the classroom is where sitting down with  
13 principals and we're arranging with them what is the  
14 best solution for their school. I cannot account to  
15 what happened from the previous years. I can  
16 definitely...

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, yeah.

18 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: ... look  
19 forward to this year and I'm meeting with principals  
20 and I'm talking with principals myself. In fact, my  
21 team went out and visited almost 50 schools the first  
22 couple days of the school year...

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great.

24 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: ...to get a  
25 real sense. In fact, we are meeting with every

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2 principal throughout the entire city this year to  
3 discuss what's happening in the lunch room and one of  
4 the major things we're discussing with principals who  
5 are part of the breakfast in the classroom program  
6 what we're going to do in their school. In fact,  
7 *Principal Weekly*, which is the publication that goes  
8 out for all principals to read about things that are  
9 happening inside of the schools, we put in there the  
10 list of all the sites that are going to be rolled out  
11 this year. So we're already engaging principals.  
12 We're already engaging superintendents. In fact,  
13 superintendents are part of the conversation...

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Sure.

15 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: They're  
16 invited to the meeting at the school level when we  
17 meet with every single school about the roll-out of  
18 breakfast in the classroom this year.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good.

20 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: I just want  
21 to clarify, though. Every single school throughout  
22 New York City...

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

24 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: ...has  
25 breakfast after the bell.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Absolutely.

3 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: One of the  
4 options is breakfast in the classroom. Another  
5 option grab and go. And then second chance  
6 breakfast.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Got it.

8 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Every  
9 school throughout New York City has an option for  
10 breakfast after the bell.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, right. OK.  
12 And so grab and go is being utilized pretty well as  
13 well?

14 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Grab and go  
15 in sites where space is a concern or there really is  
16 an instructional kind of concern. It's also bringing  
17 the breakfast to the classroom. We have some  
18 buildings that are really old throughout the city.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah.

20 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Carrying in  
21 these breakfasts, up and down the stairs, can be  
22 difficult.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yup.

24 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Grab and go  
25 could be an option for those schools to be able to do

2 that. I visited a site in District 32 in Brooklyn  
3 where breakfast in the classroom is the only way to  
4 do it. I visited sites throughout the city where  
5 grab and go, where principals allow a little  
6 additional time in the lunchroom or the cafeteria for  
7 the kids to eat is the way to go. In those sites  
8 we're seeing very high breakfast participation. And  
9 we look forward to doing that again with the  
10 principals that we roll out this year.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Great, I mean, this  
12 is all great to hear and I thank Chancellor Carranza  
13 for taking this on, you know, so assiduously because  
14 we are kind of making up for lost time. Um, you  
15 know, if we compare ourselves to other jurisdictions  
16 around the country, some of them, smaller but not  
17 that small, so Newark, New Jersey, Detroit, Michigan,  
18 Boise, Idaho, you know, there's, there are school  
19 systems that have made this work to where the  
20 participation rate is over 90% of the children that  
21 are qualified for free or reduced lunch are actually  
22 eating breakfast. So we're, I'm glad to hear that  
23 we're really advancing this, um, and, um, it just  
24 takes that kind of will and that kind of focus and,  
25 um, and, ah, and get the message across to principals

2 and teachers and superintendents that, you know, the  
3 benefits to this, um, far outweigh the, you know, the  
4 annoyances that come along with it. But it's worth  
5 it. It's worth it.

6 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: I  
7 appreciate that comment, and once again I thank the  
8 council for their support with breakfast in the  
9 classroom and the food advocates across the city. I  
10 know some of them are sitting here. It really helped  
11 us get the message out and roll this out effectively.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, yeah, yup. Um,  
13 and then a quick question about Intro 1659 around  
14 SNAP eligibility with seniors? So what is the current  
15 scope of, of, ah, efforts to enroll seniors, SNAP-  
16 eligible seniors in SNAP?

17 JILL BERRY: Um-hmm, thank you for that  
18 question. Um, so there's a concerted effort, um, and  
19 partnership, um, focused on seniors between HRA and  
20 the Department of the Aging or DFTA to make sure that  
21 we're doing outreach to all eligible seniors through  
22 HRA and the benefits onboarding throughout the city  
23 and access points. We're also doing that in  
24 collaboration with the Department of the Aging where  
25 there's a significant amount of work happening in

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2 senior centers and other touch points across programs  
3 and service points to make sure seniors know when  
4 we're ensuring that they are equally enrolled into  
5 the program.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: How about seniors  
7 that are part of the case management system?

8 JILL BERRY: That's a great question.  
9 Um, and I'm actually going to have my colleague from  
10 DFTA come up and share specifics about case  
11 management in particular.

12 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right, right, large  
13 universe.

14 JILL BERRY: Yes. So this is Edgar Yu,  
15 chief of staff of DFTA.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I think they might  
17 have to swear you in.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Do you swear to  
19 tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the  
20 truth, and answer council members' questions  
21 honestly? Thank you, and I think we had a DFTA  
22 hearing this morning, so you're working all day.

23 EDGAR YU: Um, as Dr. McDonald mentioned  
24 earlier, yes, DFTA is, ah, is engaged in very  
25 concerted efforts to ensure that all seniors that we

2 engage are, ah, determined whether or not they're  
3 eligible for benefits and entitlements, ah, in our  
4 senior centers. All senior center members undergoing  
5 a registration process and that actually includes the  
6 determination of eligibility, um, and if they are  
7 determined eligible, um, senior center staff are  
8 mandated to offer and provide assistance with  
9 enrolling for those particular benefits. Um, as far  
10 as case management goes, a similar process. Um, all  
11 21 case management agencies that we work with in  
12 their assessment of the needs of the particular  
13 clients, ah, help determine eligibility and will  
14 assist with enrollment if they're eligible.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Do you, so then when  
16 it comes to, so 73% is, is very good. Um, that 20%,  
17 27%, um, that are not enrolled, um, do we have an  
18 accurate picture of why they're not enrolled, so  
19 service resistant, or, um, ah, or they're not being  
20 reached through a DFTA program? I mean, have we tried  
21 to ascertain where they fall in that continuum?

22 EDWARD YU: Um, yeah, I mean, service  
23 resistance certainly is part of it, um, but, again,  
24 our, our staff and our providers and our contracted  
25 providers often sort of re-up these conversations

2 with clients, um, those, particularly those who are  
3 in fact eligible. Um, and outreach efforts, you  
4 know, all of our providers are engaged with, engaging  
5 with the public, um, we have trainings very often  
6 with our senior center providers around, ah, Access  
7 NYC, which has a direct linkage...

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, yeah.

9 EDWARD YU: Of course, Access HRA. And  
10 yeah, so we try to touch, ah, our seniors.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: With regard to Access  
12 HRA obviously, you know, there are going to be a lot  
13 of seniors that, you know, don't have iPhones and are  
14 not, you know, particularly comfortable doing  
15 everything online. Obviously, increasingly they are,  
16 but, um, you know, there has been a number of SNAP  
17 center closures. Um, are, how, how are we tracking,  
18 um, the impact to the senior population for the SNAP  
19 centers closings? And it's complicated, SNAP centers  
20 are closing because the foot traffic is, is not as  
21 much as it used to be, but, um, but there's bound to  
22 be some impact, particularly with seniors.

23 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Um, I appreciate that  
24 question. It's thoughtful. I think the ways that  
25 senior, or all populations that we're serving for

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2 access to SNAP, obviously we're looking at the  
3 different channels that they're coming in. Um, to  
4 your point, there's an increasing use of technology  
5 among many populations, including seniors, but not in  
6 total. Um, to the point...

7 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: You have to tell  
8 that to my parents, please.

9 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: [laughs]

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: It's been an  
11 increase in usage. That's not happening.

12 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: That's not happening?  
13 We'll have to do an intervention.

14 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: No, no, no, don't  
15 tell my dad. [crosstalk]

16 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Right, we'll make an,  
17 there's always that, like, what is that thing that's  
18 inspiring to get them on board.

19 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Right.

20 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: So to the point about  
21 closures, I'm happy to have our colleagues from HRA  
22 come back and speak to that specifically. I think  
23 there's, there's obviously...

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: But before, before  
25 DFTA leaves, though...

2 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Yeah?

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: While we implement  
4 these there's going to be cost involved with  
5 healthier meals, like with did with cultural meals  
6 and with senior centers, the costs are going to be  
7 involved from transitioning the city to healthier  
8 foods, we're going to have to all team work together  
9 to make sure the budgeting has that. Are we prepared  
10 to do that?

11 EDWARD YU: Ah, yeah, as I'm sure you  
12 well know the administration added 10 million dollars  
13 just recently in the food model budget for congregate  
14 meals. Ah, it'll increase to 15 million dollars in  
15 out years. So this is definitely in the forefront of  
16 DFTA's mind and we'll continue to engage the council.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: OK, got it. And  
18 then, I'm sorry, ah, [inaudible] do you want to talk  
19 about that at all, about?

20 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Would you like more,  
21 um, clarity around the closures questions? We're  
22 absolutely happy to follow up as well.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yeah, I just, I think  
24 it's just, I mean, I want to make sure that we're  
25 tracking, you know, that we're able to just aggregate

2 SNAP users by age so that we're seeing if there are  
3 any, you know, additional, um, you know, case  
4 closures or failure to recertify among 65 and over.

5 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: I think that's a  
6 great point and we're happy to follow up with that  
7 specifically [inaudible]. I think the other point,  
8 um, that you're mentioning, I know that there's,  
9 there's different modalities, right? So there's the  
10 centers, the physicality, there's, we're talking  
11 about the portal, or the electronic kind of smart  
12 phone engagement. There's also just [inaudible]  
13 applying.

14 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Over the phone.

15 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Right, and we're  
16 seeing actual, to your important point about, um,  
17 recertification, we're, we are, the city has made  
18 really important investments in not having kind of  
19 long blocks of time for individuals to have to be  
20 available...

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yup, on demand.

22 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: ...and we're doing it  
23 at their schedule and, you know, in ways that are  
24 truly about meeting clients where they are, and I

2 think we're seeing a lot of, um, really important,  
3 um, uptick based on that.

4 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And then lastly I  
5 just want to ask about the resolutions out of the  
6 General Welfare Committee that Council Member Louis,  
7 ah, is she here? OK. You know, I'll leave it to her  
8 to ask those questions.

9 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: OK.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Chair Treyger?

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, just a very  
12 quick follow-up item about breakfast in the  
13 classrooms, because I really hope and expect us not  
14 to go through that battle again to restore food for  
15 children. I could not believe that that was even up  
16 for debate in the budget process. But just to kind  
17 of quickly note some of the excuses or reasons we got  
18 from the DOE with regards to why that was on the  
19 table, or from the administration, there were  
20 questions about storing equipment, issues about how,  
21 you know, maintenance of something, if milk drops or  
22 if food drops on the floor. We're not building a  
23 rocket ship to Mars. We're serving breakfast. This  
24 is not complicated. We could figure this out, um,  
25 and I just don't want us to kind of go through that

2 battle again of breakfast in the classroom and  
3 breakfast for kids. Let's actually figure out ways  
4 to support schools. I think some schools just want  
5 guidance on implementation, which is a fair request.  
6 Because some teachers did ask a valid question, if  
7 breakfast is being served in the classroom what  
8 happens if they're being observed by a supervisor?  
9 Fair question. Is there a rubric? Is there is a  
10 guidance? Maybe that's not a time to observe, I  
11 don't know. But those are fair questions that  
12 teachers did ask, which we should be able to provide  
13 answers to for the school. So I just want to make a  
14 note that we should not have a fight over feeding our  
15 kids in schools. We should be doubling down more to  
16 feed our kids in schools. Thank you, and I'll turn  
17 it over to my colleagues.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So with our three  
19 co-chairs that was our first round, and we have quite  
20 a few panels, and I'd ask our city agencies to stay  
21 around because our council members are signed up for  
22 questions, so we're going to do the best we can.  
23 We've also been joined by Council Members Cohen,  
24 Rodriguez, Barron, and Cornegy. For questions, we  
25 have Council Member Louis, who signed up first.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Good afternoon  
3 everyone.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And then will be  
5 followed by Gibson and Grodenchik.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Good afternoon,  
7 everyone. I want to thank committee Chairs Levin,  
8 Vallone, and Treyger for the opportunity to testify  
9 at this joint hearing. Every day there are thousands  
10 of families wondering what's for breakfast or dinner,  
11 while staring at an empty frig, cabinets, and kitchen  
12 table. Food insecurity is a struggle for more than  
13 one million New Yorkers unable to make ends meet in  
14 the city, where the cost of living continues to  
15 outpace wages and salaries. For those New Yorkers  
16 they must make a critical choice, paying for their  
17 rent or keeping the lights on versus buying  
18 groceries. The elderly, disabled, homeless, and  
19 students and low-income communities are typically  
20 greater, at greater risk of being food insecure. The  
21 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, is  
22 meant to close that widening gap. But there are  
23 several barriers that prevent millions of eligible  
24 recipients from using these benefits. Meanwhile,  
25 food pantries and soup kitchens citywide have become

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2 a lifelong, a lifeline for families in need and  
3 cannot keep food on their shelves in response to the  
4 increasing demand. No one should ever have to wonder  
5 when or from where their next meal is coming from.  
6 In New York City and State we have an incredible  
7 opportunity to help families not, in order for them  
8 not to just survive but also to thrive. My  
9 resolutions, 1024 and 1025, would drastically expand  
10 access to the most basic human right, which is food.  
11 Resolution 1024 calls upon New York State, the New  
12 York State Office of Temporary and Disability  
13 Assistance to expand eligibility for the Supplemental  
14 Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP, to  
15 public schools college students. Resolution 1025  
16 calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass and  
17 the governor to sign legislation to opt into the  
18 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known  
19 as SNAP. Their program, which is the Restaurant  
20 Meals program, to allow disabled, elderly, and  
21 homeless SNAP recipients to use their benefits on hot  
22 meals and other prepared foods at participating  
23 grocery stores, delis, and restaurants. This is the  
24 reality. Poverty and homeless affect New Yorkers who  
25 are employed, underemployed, and unemployed. Access

2 to healthy prepared foods has a significant impact on  
3 how students learn and the quality of life of our  
4 city's most vulnerable population, which is our  
5 seniors. Allowing SNAP recipients to use their  
6 benefits towards hot and prepared meals allows them  
7 to focus on other pressing issues, securing  
8 employment, childcare, and their own well-being. I  
9 urge my colleagues to support these two resolutions  
10 that will help close the gap and end hunger for  
11 millions of New Yorkers. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And congratulations  
13 on those great resolutions, Council Member. Ah, for  
14 the four students who are waiting, just because I  
15 know it might be your first time here at City Hall,  
16 welcome. So for Yadira, Andrea, Harper, and Tyler.  
17 We just have a few more council members going to ask  
18 this panel some questions and then you guys will be  
19 the stars of the day. Sound good? All right. So  
20 now it's Council Member, it would be, ah, Ampry-  
21 Samuel.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you  
23 to the chairs for putting together this important  
24 hearing and allowing us the opportunity to speak on  
25 so many critical pieces of legislation today, and for

2 the record I want to also thank the speaker for his  
3 leadership and fight for food equity across New York  
4 City. And thank you, Council Member Gibson, for  
5 allowing me to speak before you. Getting right to  
6 it, the average life expectancy for New York City is  
7 81.2 years, which is 2.5 years higher than the  
8 nationwide average, according to the data revealed in  
9 the community health profiles for the New York City  
10 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Life  
11 expectancy in Brooklyn varies by neighborhood, with  
12 some doing better than the average and others falling  
13 well below. For example, residents in Borough Park  
14 in Brooklyn live an average of three years longer at  
15 84.2 years. Meanwhile, in my district residents live  
16 6.1 years less on average at 71, 75.1 years. As we  
17 know, this has contributed to health disparities and  
18 poor air quality. Although air quality is improving  
19 in New York City in general, in my district we have  
20 some of the highest levels of the most harmful air  
21 pollutants. Community gardens directly contribute to  
22 air quality and overall good health. Bill number  
23 1652 addresses the ongoing demand to protect our  
24 community gardens by appropriate reclassification.  
25 Currently community gardens are designated as vacant

2 lots and we know they are not vacant. They are full  
3 of life and contribute to healthy living and outcomes  
4 and increase the life expectancies. The focus should  
5 be on curbing high asthma rates and not focused on  
6 development and inappropriately placed tall  
7 buildings. Not every city-owned lot should be  
8 designated for housing, as our experience in certain  
9 communities. And bill number 1653 will help us  
10 collect data and maintain metrics to figure out how  
11 we can improve on the quality of our gardens in our  
12 districts and support overall healthy lifestyles.  
13 These bills are personal to me because earlier this  
14 year when my money was diagnosed with an illness that  
15 required her to immediately shift to a plant-based  
16 diet she could not find a fresh head of lettuce  
17 anywhere in our neighborhood. The local grocery  
18 store down the street recently closed and is slated  
19 for housing development. But community gardens like  
20 Isabaya Group and Campaign Against Hunger were able  
21 to provide my mother and other seniors in my district  
22 with fresh fruits and vegetables that are not easily  
23 accessible in the district. These two bills are  
24 critical and can be a matter in some instances of  
25 life and death in our current climate. I look

2 forward to working with City Planning along with  
3 Parks and Recreation and my colleagues and the  
4 council and advocates in making these bills a reality  
5 so that community gardens are protected and have the  
6 data necessary to provide them with the resources to  
7 thrive and expand. And I know that, I tried to do  
8 that really fast, in less than three minutes, and so,  
9 um, you mentioned in your testimony that you just had  
10 some concerns with the data bill, 1653, and so my  
11 question is what did you mean by unintended  
12 consequences? Can you just give me an example so  
13 that we can like figure that out?

14 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Absolutely, and I'm  
15 going to ask my colleague from Parks to come up to  
16 speak to the specifics of that, since they own the  
17 expertise.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you,  
19 thank you.

20 SAM BEDERMAN: Hello, hi, this on?

21 UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah.

22 SAM BEDERMAN: This is Sam Bederman from  
23 Parks. Ah, so...

24 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Oh, he has to swear  
25 him in.

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2 SAM BEDELMAN: Sorry, um, so to address  
3 the problem of, the question of unintended  
4 consequences regarding data, the collection of  
5 data...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Well, it  
7 was unintended consequences related to once if the  
8 gardens are able to, um, sale, to sell their, um,  
9 produce then there would be some unintended  
10 consequences based on that sale and so I just wanted  
11 you to clarify what were your concerns, um, with that  
12 particular piece of the bill?

13 SAM BEDELMAN: I could answer that...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK.

15 SAM BEDELMAN: But community gardens are,  
16 food production is an important part of community  
17 gardens, but, ah, there's a lot of other things that  
18 they do as well. Chiefly we find that they're useful  
19 community, spaces of community engagement. These are  
20 volunteer-run groups, right, and volunteer-run  
21 spaces. And, ah, to bring in an outside group, a  
22 large scale food distribution group, like a large  
23 green market, would trigger the city concession  
24 rules, which could fundamentally change the nature of  
25 these volunteer-run spaces. I do want to

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2 underscore, though, that there are a couple of  
3 important opportunities that already exist for food  
4 distribution coming out of the green thumb gardens.  
5 One of them is that we allow volunteer gardeners who  
6 grow food, vegetables, honey, flowers, whatever,  
7 eggs, in their gardens to, ah, sell those from the  
8 gardens so long as the money goes back into the  
9 garden itself, and we also allow gardens to serve as  
10 distribution sites for community-supported  
11 agriculture organizations, CSAs, farm shares.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: OK. All  
13 right, well, thank you, and, um, also what you, did  
14 you have any concerns related to 1652 with the  
15 reclassification from vacant lots to open space and  
16 others?

17 SAM BEDELMAN: So Parks supports that.  
18 We agree that it honors the work that the volunteers  
19 do. I mean, these are important spaces. We agree.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

21 SAM BEDELMAN: Thank you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you  
23 so much.

24 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Next council  
25 member, Council Member Grodenchik.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you,  
3 Chair Vallone. It's good to see you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Good day.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I don't get  
6 to spend much time at Economic Development, but it's  
7 always good. Um, I want to follow up on something  
8 that Chair Treyger said. I got to tell you, I'm  
9 disappointed that we couldn't even come up with a  
10 number today. Um, it's a big city. We've got a lot  
11 of people working here and, um, it's not the first  
12 time that this has happened, but you can't tell me  
13 what something costs, even within a reasonable ball  
14 park. It's very hard for us to do planning here and  
15 to work with our colleagues on the other side of City  
16 Hall. I think we all want the same things, but we  
17 need accurate information. So I'm going to let that  
18 go. I want to Dr. McDonald, is it time for a food  
19 czar in New York City? Do we, are you the food czar?  
20 Or do we a need a czar or a czarina?

21 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Oh, I like that.  
22 That's quite a twist on it. Um, ah, I think the  
23 range of work that is currently happening in New York  
24 that you're seeing represented across many city  
25 agencies, there's a really important role to bring

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2 that work together that is happening through the  
3 Office of Food Policy and to really make sure that  
4 we're facilitating it in a way that it's not only  
5 about one person leading the charge, but helping to  
6 make sure that there's many people, um, czars,  
7 czarinas, that are part of that work on a regular  
8 basis within the agencies.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I know how  
10 hard it can be to coordinate activities across, I  
11 know how hard it can be in one agency, so we know how  
12 hard it can be across multiple agencies. Is it time  
13 for a food czar, czarina?

14 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: I think that, um,  
15 there's the, the amount of work and the amount of  
16 interest that agencies are stepping up and stepping  
17 into around food equity, um, in the city is  
18 impressive. I think that there's absolutely more  
19 that we, you know, are all here acknowledging today  
20 we want to do more of that work in partnership. Um,  
21 and being able to develop more solutions that should  
22 be representative of the range of expertise that the  
23 city can bring to bear on it.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Well, I thank  
25 you for that, that answer. Um, I do support more

2 scratch cooking in schools. I'm old enough to  
3 remember when they did that, especially at my, the  
4 last time I remember was Jamaica High School. So  
5 we're going back a while there. Um, is the answer  
6 maybe providing, we have, I have been an advocate, a  
7 strong advocate, along with, um, Chair Levin and our  
8 speaker and really all of my colleagues for more  
9 emergency food money. The city's number compared, I  
10 sent a message to my wife, the math professor,  
11 because I couldn't figure out what to call it. I  
12 think it's 26/10,000 of the city budget, 1%, is  
13 devoted to emergency food. Um, it's 0.0002659%, 1%,  
14 that that is. So it's 25 million out of 94 billion.  
15 We have an incredible network of food pantries,  
16 emergency food providers across the City of New York  
17 and they do phenomenal work in feeding hundreds and  
18 hundreds of thousands, millions of New Yorkers a  
19 year. Do we need more money? I know it's not budget  
20 season yet. But, you know, budget season, this is a  
21 full contact sport in New York City and I would like  
22 to hear what your opinion is on that.

23 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: I appreciate the  
24 question.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I know you  
3 work for the mayor, but it's OK, so he won't hear any  
4 of this, so you can tell us what you think.

5 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Thank you, thank you.  
6 [laughter] Um, and I will actually, I will, um, share  
7 that I am deeply committed to this work. I actually,  
8 um, prior to the seat that I am in now came from the  
9 world of charitable feeding. Um, it's really  
10 important. New York City has incredible assets, as  
11 you acknowledged, and the partners that are in the  
12 community doing this work on a daily basis, the city  
13 is absolutely in support of the work that is  
14 happening in partnership with those organizations It  
15 know their communities well, that are creating doors  
16 that are accessible, that are aligned with their, um,  
17 individual dietary cultural needs and that meet  
18 people where they are. I think that there's'  
19 absolutely more that we can all be doing in  
20 partnership and look forward to doing that together  
21 with you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: How about  
23 some more money? It's OK. You don't have to answer.  
24 I know you want more money. We're going to try to  
25 get that.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, Council  
3 Member. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So we're going to  
5 follow with Council Member Gibson, then Cohen, then  
6 Kallos, and then we'll get to the children.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: OK.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Next, Vanessa.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you so  
10 much. Thank you, Chair Vallone, Chair Levin, and  
11 Chair Treyger. Good afternoon. Um, this has been an  
12 incredible hearing, it's so productive. I can't  
13 believe we have all these city agencies here to talk  
14 about food, food equity and food access, as well as  
15 students and advocates and, um, I've not seen a  
16 hearing of this magnitude where we have gotten an  
17 overwhelming majority of support on legislation, so  
18 I'm also grateful that if it's any topic it's food  
19 access. Um, and so I appreciate, you know, your  
20 information, I appreciate the presence of all the  
21 city agencies here. I also have one of the bills, as  
22 you referenced, Intro 1664, which will amend the City  
23 Council to require the Office of Food Policy to  
24 formulate a 10-year food policy plan, and in addition  
25 this office there will be a real intimate

2 consultation with all the relevant agencies, our  
3 local community-based organizations, community  
4 partners, food advocates that will really focus on  
5 food policy, food equity, food justice, and food  
6 insecurity, developing a real clear and defined set  
7 of goals, a vision to reduce hunger, improve  
8 nutrition and access to healthy food, um, as well as  
9 deal with food waste and really develop and improve  
10 our food and our farm economies, farmland as well as  
11 urban agriculture. Um, and so there's a lot, it's a  
12 very ambitious agenda and I'm grateful to hear that  
13 the administration supports the legislation, um, and  
14 I also wanted to just very briefly speak about some  
15 of the work I've been doing, because I represent  
16 Bronx County, um, and we have a borough-wide campaign  
17 called Not 62, and this campaign, it's a hashtag but  
18 it's really about a vision of addressing health  
19 disparities that we face in the Bronx, around heart  
20 disease, around obesity, as well as diabetes, um, and  
21 we know that there are more communities of color,  
22 obviously immigrant communities that are  
23 disproportionately impacted. Um, it's also about  
24 access opportunity, but it's equally about education,  
25 henceforth the investment of the Department of

2 Education. So you referenced the Health Bucks  
3 program and I have to tell you I am one of the  
4 biggest champions of Health Bucks. For the past few  
5 years I have been funding through my local pot of  
6 money, DOHMH \$10,000 of Health Bucks. The two-dollar  
7 coupons we give them out at farmer markets, senior  
8 centers, community centers, churches. We go on tour  
9 without our Health Bucks, because we want to make  
10 sure that people have access to farmer markets. A  
11 lot of constituents complain about the quality of  
12 food in the bodegas and the supermarkets, and we know  
13 the four boroughs like the Bronx, we definitely need  
14 access. We do live in a food desert. The summer  
15 meals program, I'm also a big champion of that. That  
16 is something I've been doing every year with the  
17 Department of Ed, the American Dairy Association, as  
18 well as the New York Yankees and the council, and we  
19 go to the pools and we give out summer meals and we  
20 encourage during the summer season, we should always  
21 be talking about nutrition. So I definitely  
22 appreciate that program and want to obviously take it  
23 to the next level. And then thirdly I have nutrition  
24 classes that I fund and work with Hunger-Free  
25 America, which I think is really important on caloric

2 intake and education, and then in the Bronx we formed  
3 a Bronx public health task force with the Department  
4 of Health with a Bronx office where we're trying to  
5 put together specific borough recommendations on  
6 policies. Um, so I think again overall we're doing a  
7 lot, but we have to obviously take this to the next  
8 level. All of these different elements have to work  
9 together. Just as Chair Treyger talked about the  
10 cafeteria and cafe redesign, we also have to look at  
11 the staffing levels for our cafeteria and support  
12 staff. So I definitely want to make sure, that's a  
13 plug to DOE, to make sure that we have the sufficient  
14 staff we need. Um, but specifically I wanted to ask  
15 a question, um, in your testimony the food policy,  
16 the Office of Food Policy has been in existence for  
17 about 10 years now, and so my question is why have we  
18 not put together an actual food plan and now with my  
19 legislation I'm calling on developing this 10-year  
20 plan. So you mentioned that there are things being  
21 done. If you could expand a little bit and elaborate  
22 on some of the vision as well as the plan and the  
23 priorities that this office has and how that 10-year  
24 plan will look.

2 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Hmm, thank you. Um,  
3 first, you have incredible passion for this and so  
4 thank you for that, thank you for being a champion of  
5 this work. It takes many people, as you know, to be  
6 able to do this on a daily basis.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Absolutely.

8 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Um, and I think to  
9 that point there are many different aspects of what  
10 we need to make sure that we are continuing to fold  
11 into the understanding of what it will take to create  
12 an equitable food system. I think we have increasing  
13 knowledge of the connection of the environment, um,  
14 how we're making sure that there's a frame of local  
15 communities from a food justice perspective involved,  
16 so it goes beyond solely access, which is, continues  
17 to be a central part of how we need to look at this  
18 work. Specific to your question, the, I appreciate  
19 the bill and we are looking forward to continuing  
20 that conversation. Um, as you point out the office  
21 has continued to do important work since its  
22 inception and as a lot of work that has happened  
23 across, you know, agencies and offices, um, that work  
24 has continued to evolve to meet the city's needs, um,  
25 at the time, um, in place of continuing to step up

2 and there's been real progress around those  
3 initiatives that has allowed us to be at the place  
4 today where we are ready to do that as the next step.  
5 And so the, um, the range of work that's happening  
6 around food equity across the city agencies, the  
7 commitment and the articulate, thoughtful ways that  
8 this is happening in communities, but this is a  
9 moment to really bring that together. My point, um,  
10 in my testimony about the fact that there's thinking  
11 underway, there's real energy from the office and  
12 from our city partners as well as a lot of the  
13 stakeholders and advocates that are, um, really  
14 bringing important ideas to this work. There's been  
15 conversation and I've been working to, um, lay out a  
16 basis and a framework for what that will look like  
17 and so it's great timing to be able to bring those  
18 things together in partnership with the bill that  
19 you've introduced.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: OK, great, and I  
21 guess as I close, I know my time is up, the final  
22 thing I will say is just, ah, encouraging the agent,  
23 agencies to continuously work together with the  
24 administration, but I also do not want to forget the  
25 community partners. Ah, we at the council have a

2 food pantry initiative that we fund every year to  
3 local food pantries and soup kitchens, and we also,  
4 you know, work with Food Bank and City Harvest,  
5 Coalition for the Homeless, I have to say on behalf  
6 of the Bronx, we have a mobile unit that travels  
7 around the Bronx every single night and feeds street  
8 homeless New Yorkers, and so I don't want to forget  
9 that plug, not just the urban farms, agriculture, the  
10 schools, HRA, SNAP, you know, every part of this,  
11 homeless individuals on the street, the shelters,  
12 everyone has to be involved because I think when you  
13 talk about access to food, regardless of your housing  
14 status, where you live, your ZIP code, your  
15 neighborhood, none of that should matter. But this  
16 is really about access and opportunity as well as the  
17 amount of money you have in your bank access, and so  
18 for a lot of our New Yorkers and constituents that is  
19 the factor and that does contribute to their access,  
20 so I just want to be mindful that any task force,  
21 working groups, the Office of Food Policy, that we  
22 have that we really include the folks that are on the  
23 ground. They're doing this work every single day.  
24 You think I'm passionate? They're even more  
25 passionate, so.

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2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Council Member, I  
3 have to ask you to wrap up.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: I thank you so  
5 much and thank you, Chair, sorry.

6 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, Council  
7 Member. Council Member Cohen, then Kallos.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you, Chair.  
9 Um, around 1660, part of the, you know, one of the  
10 goals of the legislation is sort of a codification of  
11 values that we have in terms of food purchasing.  
12 Could you talk a little about the challenges between  
13 lowest bidder and expressing our values through food  
14 purchasing that the city faces?

15 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Sure. Thank you for  
16 that question, Council Member. Um, we are really  
17 invested in looking at, um, the development of good  
18 food purchasing for the city. This is a framework  
19 that's important to add on to the really deep and  
20 advanced way that this city is already really  
21 thinking about and measuring both the quality, the  
22 safety, and understanding the different dimensions of  
23 food that we're serving through many different city  
24 agencies, through many different, um, to many  
25 different communities that have different needs. We

2 equally are engaging our partners that are overseeing  
3 the work around contracting and procurement for the  
4 city to make sure that we are able to think about  
5 introducing new lenses into how we want we want to  
6 understand the food that we're procuring meets  
7 different standards beyond cost to continue to build  
8 that direction. There is partnership there and we  
9 look forward to continuing that conversation and  
10 sharing more back.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Can you talk  
12 about, though, to date some of the barriers that  
13 we're encountering in trying to, you know, do food  
14 purchasing in a good food purchasing manner?

15 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Hmm, I think, so the,  
16 one of the things, just to bring us back to is the  
17 fact that New York City has, you know, met and  
18 exceeded in many ways the health and nutrition  
19 standard, so that is of primary importance and we  
20 lead with that. The new dimensions that are part of  
21 good food purchasing, so local economies,  
22 understanding the labor force, um, thinking about  
23 the, um, the animal, you know, rights and welfare,  
24 those are all factors of the framework that we are  
25 actively thinking about how do we address that. To

2 your question about some of the ways that we have  
3 understood that we, you know, procured food in the  
4 past, as you are well away, New York City agencies,  
5 DOE, for example, the volume of food that we are  
6 required to take on a daily basis to meet those  
7 health standards and provide that food as our primary  
8 goal, um, to different populations we're serving  
9 that, um, part of that is working with very large  
10 consolidators to bring that food in. They work with  
11 farmers, they work with different growers and  
12 producers, and so there's a really opportunity to  
13 really learn more about through data as part of that  
14 procurement process where that food is coming from,  
15 to make sure that all of it is understood in  
16 relationship to the framework.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you, Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Council Member  
19 Kallos, then Council Member Menchaca. We've also  
20 been joined by Borough President Gail Brewer.  
21 Welcome.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you to the  
23 chairs for having this committee and all the  
24 committee staff and all the various committees that  
25 are working on this. I'm Council Member Ben Kallos,

2 that's @benkallos. I have been focused on food since  
3 I've gotten elected. We had a food policy fellow in  
4 our office. It started with Amanda Melholder, then  
5 went on to Leah Eden, and if anyone is interested in  
6 being a food policy fellow we do have a vacancy and a  
7 need. We do a lot of work on food. I also want to  
8 thank those who were there before me, Council Member  
9 Brad Lander, who allowed me to carry last term a food  
10 policy council legislation and my state senator, Liz  
11 Kruger, and of course our borough president, Gail  
12 Brewer, who has been waiting patiently for several  
13 hours, but has been working on a lot of these issues  
14 for a very, very long time, back to when she was a  
15 staffer for then-borough president Ruth Messinger.  
16 And so I want to just touch base on a handful of  
17 items. We have a food reporting bill. We're eager  
18 to get the October version. I will have a question  
19 for the Office of School Food. But I guess first  
20 question, I just want to go back and forth as quickly  
21 as possible and also just I support every single one  
22 of these bills. I'm a co-sponsor on every single  
23 one, along with Council Member Diana Ayala. How long  
24 has the Office of Food's executive director position  
25 been vacant?

2 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Ah, we are actively  
3 engaged in the search and look forward to bringing on  
4 a director soon. Ah, yeah.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you for the  
6 quick answer. I hope we can get some definitive  
7 answers around soon. The next question is with  
8 regards to the Office of Food Policy, thank you for  
9 being supportive of it. How can that, ah, office  
10 take feedback from the community? Is it, should we  
11 include in this package the Food Policy Council to  
12 give everyone a stake at the table or is there  
13 something we can do with the existing bill? But how  
14 do we make sure that the Office of Food is informed  
15 by the community and help set plans like that of  
16 Council Member Gibson's for the 10-year plan?

17 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Hmm, thank you for  
18 the question. As you hearing, there's a lot of  
19 investment currently and interest to continue the  
20 work of engaging community to not just hear from them  
21 but also to co-create. Um, the office works in  
22 partnership with all of the city agencies that are  
23 actively engaged in, um, food procurement and  
24 delivery efforts to make sure that they are equally  
25 engaging the constituents around those specific

2 programs because there's a vast range of ways that  
3 we're engaging community. There's absolutely ways  
4 that we are going to continue to engage community in  
5 that visioning, as we've been discussing.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: OK. I have about  
7 30 seconds so I'm going to ask two questions, one to  
8 you, which would be, ah, just how many agencies in  
9 the city are there dealing with issues of food  
10 insecurity and hunger and food and who should be  
11 under the guise of this agency and who should this  
12 office, ah, report to? And then the other questions  
13 is, ah, I come from the tech background. In  
14 technology when you use what you make it's called  
15 dogfooding, but it's not a comment on anything  
16 regarding the product, so I had question for the  
17 DOE's Office of School Food about whether the people  
18 involved in that office actually eat school food.  
19 Ah, I noticed at Tweed that there was a cafe of sorts  
20 and I didn't know whether or not they were serving  
21 school food and if there's an opportunity, I have a  
22 hypothesis. I think that if the Office of School  
23 Food and the chancellor ate school food every day,  
24 three square meals a day, that we would have the best  
25 food in the world [laughs].

2 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: To your first  
3 question, um, so as you are seeing here today, all of  
4 the agencies that are represented here and a larger  
5 number beyond that, I'm happy to circle back with,  
6 um, a more specific numerical value. But all of  
7 these agencies are engaged directly and in support of  
8 work to address food equity, um, from different  
9 dimensions. As we've talked about today, we're  
10 talking about not access alone, but understanding  
11 community, understanding community development,  
12 understanding the relationship to sustainability and  
13 the environment, understanding the underlying roots,  
14 ah, root cause factors that are really at play here,  
15 and so all of those agencies are actively engaged in  
16 conversation, um, and I would equally say have a very  
17 thoughtful understanding of the ways that their work  
18 is connected to a broader food equity frame that we  
19 look forward to continuing to build. Um, from the  
20 perspective of DOE, I will let my colleague answer  
21 that. I will say I often, when I go visit, will eat  
22 school, school food, and I know that, um, many of the  
23 colleagues, I have actually been part of...

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Kudos.

2 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: ...conversation with  
3 DOE team members who kind of fly that flag as  
4 something that they really value, that this is a  
5 long-standing investment for them. But I'll turn it  
6 to Chris.

7 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Thank you  
8 for the question. The Tweed Cafe, which is the food  
9 place inside of 52 Chambers, actually has our food  
10 and the chancellor, I think most recently had a  
11 chicken salad sandwich and we had a discussion over  
12 that sandwich, which he really liked. I eat that  
13 food every single day, every time it's available.  
14 When I'm at Tweed I'll eat that food.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Kudos. Thank  
16 you.

17 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: The tuna  
18 fish is delicious. [laughter]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: And so can there  
20 be a commitment to do that and when you have events  
21 cater and use that school food and what-have-you and  
22 just really get people eating the school foods so  
23 that folks are just in it all the way?

24 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: The  
25 priority always is to serve the 1.1 million students

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2 in our city. We can explore ways to provide meals to  
3 adults, but we need to make sure that we're serving  
4 the students as best as possible.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: And I think,  
6 last, last, last question, is there an opportunity  
7 to, um, make, so we have universal breakfast, we have  
8 universal lunch now, ah, I believe, I have a degree  
9 in psychology, I believe in Maslow's hierarchy of  
10 needs and it means I'm missing one meal. I'm missing  
11 supper. Ah, how can we get supper, ah, what  
12 limitations, if any, are there to supper, or is it  
13 just simply a matter of pairing all the after-school  
14 programs with supper?

15 CHRISTOPHER JACARAKOW DEWEY: Currently  
16 any school-run after-school program, educational or  
17 enrichment, schools can apply to provide after-school  
18 meals or dinner meals. Um, it's important that we  
19 continue to maintain the proper records regarding  
20 reimbursement for all after-school meals. I think as  
21 far as offering supper, when students are in after-  
22 school programs that are recognized by the DOE, we do  
23 provide them after-school or supper meals.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, Council  
3 Member Kallos. And following up on the council  
4 member's questions about the office and your, ah,  
5 pursuit of a new director, how many staff does the  
6 office have now?

7 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: The staff, ah, the  
8 office has three staff positions.

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And has that been  
10 for all of 2019 and prior, or has that been ramped  
11 up, or plans to expand the office?

12 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: Um, we are actively  
13 looking at that. I think part of, you know, one of  
14 the opportunities that we're here talking about the  
15 range of different focus on food equity, um,  
16 expansion or opportunities to continue to partner is  
17 to think about and really make sure we're pointing  
18 the office in a way that can officially, efficiently  
19 address that agenda. One of the other points that I,  
20 I think is really important to make sure is clear is  
21 that the office puts a very clear coordinating role  
22 and facilitation role and is able to engage through  
23 the resources of all of our city partners that are  
24 not only making their resources available around food  
25 and the work that we're doing to deliver the

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2 solutions, but are, um, also leading in with our  
3 staff to really deliver on that agenda.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: For all the good  
5 work we're talking about today it's clear we're going  
6 to have to expand that budget and get some more  
7 staff, because three people is not going to cut it.

8 DR. ERIN MCDONALD: We're happy to have  
9 that conversation with OMB, absolutely.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Perfect. So thank  
11 you, Doctor, and thank you to our panel for being  
12 with us. Please stay around as we have some great  
13 questions coming from some of the students. I'd like  
14 to call up the students who have been waiting, and I  
15 know the borough president, love to hear, would love  
16 to hear from us, I see she's saying yes already. So  
17 we have Yadira Garcia, Andrea Strong, Harper Quill,  
18 and Tyler Scott shall be the students and children  
19 that are going to speak to us for a little bit. Now,  
20 remember, it's not just, yeah, the four students. So  
21 the panel members, when you come up, you're all going  
22 to have two minutes to speak. If you have written  
23 testimony, after the students, just please submit the  
24 testimony. If it's longer than that, do not read it,  
25 because we're going to cut you off at two. Just give

2 us a summary of it. All right. Hello, welcome. If  
3 you get, just all tell us your names and what age you  
4 are and what school you go to, and then we'd love to  
5 hear from you. If you could put your mics on.  
6 There's a little red button there in front of you.

7 ANDREA STRONG: Ah, if it's OK I'll  
8 start. I know that Harper's a little nervous.

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Still in high  
10 school, I see.

11 ANDREA STRONG: So thank you, Council  
12 Member Vallone...

13 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: You're welcome.

14 ANDREA STRONG: ...Council Member Kallos,  
15 and Treyger and Gibson and the rest of the, Colin, is  
16 that your, we haven't met yet, but thank you  
17 everybody for, um, for hearing from us. I'm Andrea  
18 Strong. I am a journalist. If you haven't read my  
19 piece on the dark side of chocolate milk that came  
20 out yesterday please read it before bed. If it  
21 doesn't put to you to sleep you might learn  
22 something. I am the mother of two elementary school  
23 children and the founder of the New York City Health  
24 School Food Alliance. That's an advocacy  
25 organization working to revolutionize school food and

2 food education in New York City. We are advocating  
3 for four policy changes, which would ensure that the  
4 DOE 1) moves away from serving children highly  
5 processed meals and instead prepare scratch-cooked  
6 meals, 2) brings nutrition and food education to  
7 every grade, beginning in pre-K, 3) plants culinary  
8 gardens at every school, and, last, increases the  
9 duration that all children have to eat their lunch  
10 and play at recess to one full hour. I support all  
11 of the bills in Speaker Johnson's growing food equity  
12 plan, but my food, my testimony will focus on, ah,  
13 bill number 1676, requiring the Department of  
14 Education to come up with a scratch cooking  
15 implementation plan. This bill is critical to  
16 prioritizing the health of our children, who are in  
17 crisis, as we've heard. Within New York City one in  
18 five kindergarten students and one in four Head Start  
19 children is obese. Children as young as 8 years old  
20 are on cholesterol-lowering and blood pressure-  
lowering medication. 50% of children under the age  
22 of 15 have fatty streaks in their arteries, the  
beginning signs of heart disease. In addition, a  
24 study published by the *American Journal of Public*  
25 *Health* found that there's a significant relationship

2 between unhealthy dietary patterns and poor mental  
3 health in children and adolescents. But the final  
4 statistic is the hardest one. According to a 2005  
5 study by the *New England Journal of Medicine* this is  
6 the first generation of children that may not outlive  
7 their parents because of the prevalence obesity. So  
8 what does school food have to do with all this? It  
9 turns out quite a lot. Children spend six hours a  
10 day in school and consume up to one-half of their  
11 calories in school. The Office of Food and Nutrition  
12 Services feeds 1.1 million children a day, and in my  
13 mind when a government organization is responsible  
14 for feeding one million children a day half of their  
15 calories there is a responsibility, if not a legal  
16 duty, to ensure that its meals are not feeding our  
17 health crisis and that is exactly what is happening.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Sorry, you're going  
19 to have summarize. I have 10 panels.

20 ANDREA STRONG: This bill, I will, sorry,  
21 I could go on.

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, thank  
23 you, thank you.

24 ANDREA STRONG: This bill is important  
25 for four reasons. First, infrastructure. I

2 appreciate that Chris could not tell us how many  
3 schools do not have kitchens. We need to know how  
4 many schools do not have kitchens in order to figure  
5 out how to roll out scratch cooking. We need to  
6 understand the infrastructure costs. We need to  
7 understand how our food service directors, how our  
8 food service workers are going to cook this food.  
9 You can't expect someone who has a food handler's  
10 permit who just knows how to bring chicken nuggets up  
11 to a safe temperature to know how to cook vegetarian  
12 chili. We need culinary training. How much will  
13 that cost? We need a timeline. This should be done.  
14 We need the scratch cooking implementation bill in  
15 order to build a road map and to successfully roll  
16 out scratch cooking to preserve the health of our  
17 children. We need strategy and vision, both of which  
18 are codified in this bill. Thank you. I'll ask  
19 Yadira or...

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you. Would  
21 any of the students like to speak? I see big smiles.

22 YADIRA GARCIA: Hi.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Just put your mic  
24 on for us, hon.

25 YADIRA GARCIA: Is it on?

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: There you go.

3 YADIRA GARCIA: I'm always on, but is the  
4 mic on?

5 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [laughs] Well,  
6 welcome to City Hall.

7 YADIRA GARCIA: Hi everybody. I know I  
8 look like a child, but I'm a 36-year-old growing  
9 child, child in my heart.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Like all of us.

11 YADIRA GARCIA: My name is Yadira Garcia.  
12 I'm a community chef and a community advocate. I  
13 started a platform called Happy Healthy Latina to  
14 disperse information to local residents and a  
15 training program called CATS, Culinary Arts and  
16 Agricultural Training, to do what, train youth into  
17 the green workforce economy. The bills that are  
18 represented here today at least represent a base  
19 level of respect and understanding and the need to  
20 address and support the immense work being done, but  
21 that needs to be done. We understand that especially  
22 in communities of color we're disproportionately  
23 affected by the health, food, housing, and climate  
24 change crisis and inequity and that furthermore those  
25 inequities are then weaponized against the same

2 students and community members and they're trapped  
3 into systems. It's deeply disrespectful that our  
4 gardens are even designated as vacant lots when  
5 they're at the crux of food production for food  
6 apartheid. I don't call it deserts because even the  
7 desert has food and water. So I call it intentional  
8 lack of access or resources. This summer I ran a  
9 pilot program to 200 youth inside of NYCHA, one of  
10 which was in Council Member Gibson's district at  
11 Butler Houses. You gave some money to that community  
12 center. Thank you, Council Member. We were in there  
13 growing food and doing heritage-based cooking and  
14 training our youth. As we're talking about providing  
15 support to the food infrastructure and the urban  
16 farms, who's going to have these jobs? We have less  
17 than 200 farmers of color providing food to our 1.1  
18 million residents. Right? And between us having  
19 these conversations I'm going into my fourth year  
20 teaching in the community and creating these programs  
21 on the peripherals, not even inculcated into our  
22 schools or into our community centers, and between  
23 that time a 14-year-old turns to be an 18-year-old.  
24 Right? A fourth grader turns into an eighth grader.  
25 How do we expect to have active, healthy, and

2 concerned citizens, especially those in the  
3 communities that are disproportionately affected if  
4 we're not consciously creating and inculcating them.  
5 So I'm holding space here for those 200 youth for  
6 these pilot programs for all of our community members  
7 and all of our students that wish that they could be  
8 here today. So I'm glad that we understand the  
9 timeliness of this conversation, but also pressing  
10 that we need to bust through these bureaucracies and  
11 do something now.

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, Yadira.

13 YADIRA GARCIA: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: We are. This is a  
15 good first step. Would the other two students like  
16 to speak?

17 HARPER QUILL: Hi, my name is Harper  
18 Quill and I am 10 years old and a fifth-grade student  
19 at PS 166, the Richard Rodgers School of Arts and  
20 Technology on the Upper West Side. I am here today to  
21 talk about scratch food in our schools. I support  
22 this policy, but you should also note that I don't  
23 eat school food. I eat breakfast at home each  
24 morning. I bring lunch from home every day. One of  
25 the main reasons is that I just like the food in my

2 house better. At home we always have fresh fruit,  
3 lots of vegetables, and no junk food. For lunch I  
4 have a sandwich, some raw veggies, an apple or  
5 orange, and a piece of dark chocolate, never milk  
6 chocolate. The food that is served at my school  
7 isn't very good. It smells bad. It looks a little  
8 [inaudible] and it tastes like cardboard. I've tried  
9 it. The dishes that are made from scratch  
10 ingredients can be composted, which is important  
11 because we shouldn't waste food. Also scratch foods  
12 aren't packaged so they create less garbage. Both of  
13 these things mean that scratch food dishes are better  
14 for the environment. Scratch dishes are also better  
15 for our health. They give kids energy, but not too  
16 much. They have less sugar and chemicals that make  
17 students moody, restless, and disruptive. Best of  
18 all, scratch cooking is a way for kids to learn about  
19 food and nutrition. In conclusion, I think that New  
20 York City schools should serve scratch food to all  
21 students, so please vote yes on this proposal. Thank  
22 you for allowing me to speak today.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you. Well  
24 done. Yes, sir.

2                   TYLER SCOTT SIMPSON: Hi, can you hear  
3 me? All right. My name Tyler Scott Simpson. I'm a  
4 senior at the New York Harbor School, the billion-  
5 oyster project-affiliated school on Governor's  
6 Island. Um, I'm actually quite hungry as I speak to  
7 you right now, which is kind of fitting for the  
8 conversation. The reason I'm hungry is that I did  
9 not have time to eat breakfast this morning because I  
10 had to leave quite early, and as a vegetarian I, the  
11 portion at school was not, ah, not filling to say the  
12 least. There was about, I think it was four mushy  
13 fried plantains, that was the option, and what looked  
14 to be some dried-out salad. I did not have the salad  
15 because I don't want E. coli. So, ah, the, um, I  
16 think, ah, something that is overlooked a lot is the  
17 balance between something that's fast but something  
18 also that's filling. So, ah, in my school at least a  
19 lot of people don't actually eat lunch because they'd  
20 rather have, take that 45 minutes to go outside and  
21 socialize or run around or play basketball or  
22 something along the lines of that. What that then  
23 means is that they have to, ah, they're either hungry  
24 or they will bring something like junk food from  
25 home. So it's very common to see bags of chips or

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2 sodas or cookies or something like that, that's easy,  
3 it's simple, and tastes, yeah, it tastes good. It's  
4 not, it's simple and it's not a, ah, a good practice  
5 to be kept on. I think scratch food is a wonderful  
6 idea because it's, it brings together those two  
7 values of something that's fast but something also  
8 that's, ah, filling and something that can give  
9 students the energy they need to complete the day.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, thank you,  
11 because when you were here earlier the principals had  
12 called saying our students are hungry. So you're  
13 hungry, my students are hungry, and the DOE was here  
14 listening. So that can't be. You can't learn if  
15 you're hungry. So we have to address. So I thank  
16 all of you for coming up and your testimony. You  
17 were the first ones today, so congratulations. I'd  
18 like to call up the Manhattan borough president who  
19 has come, and she has also given testimony for the  
20 record, which has already been included into the  
21 record, Madam Borough President, so you know. We  
22 also had a conversation of what your upcoming  
23 subcommittee hearing about the SNAP deficit, so we'd  
24 love to let you tell everyone how they can be part of  
25 that so we can have our voices heard and join with

2 you on that because that would be devastating,  
3 devastating to our, to our state. Oh, actually,  
4 Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams has Isabella  
5 Adams. Isabella are you here? Is that a yes? Yes?  
6 Good, why don't you join so you can testify  
7 afterwards if you'd like.

8 BOROUGH PRESIDENT BREWER: Should I go  
9 ahead?

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Yes, please.

11 BOROUGH PRESIDENT BREWER: OK, so anyway I  
12 am Gail Brewer, Manhattan borough president, and I  
13 want to thank the City Council. I'm going to try to  
14 summarize some of this...

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

16 BOROUGH PRESIDENT BREWER: Because I know  
17 you have a copy of it. So one of the issues that we  
18 have focused on is the summer meals. Ever since I  
19 came to the borough president's office we've made  
20 some improvements, but the real issue with summer  
21 meals in the past, it's changing, thanks to Schula  
22 Warren from our office, who is here, and has pulled  
23 together a task force to look at summer meals. But  
24 the real problem has been that every single year the  
25 Department of Education, for whatever reason, doesn't

2 coordinate enough with Parks and with NYCHA and the  
3 locations of the summer meals programs are not given  
4 to parents in a timely manner. That's the sum of it.  
5 And it has been going on for four years.  
6 Improvement, yes. Perfect? Not at all. So Intro 7,  
7 1675, would require the Department of Education to  
8 mail information about meals to students. That's the  
9 sum of it. And it would have to be done before June  
10 1. And it's always a challenge because NYCHA will  
11 tell you we don't have the sites. They have to have  
12 the sites by that date, and the Department of  
13 Education usually does, but they still have to  
14 coordinate with everybody else. I can tell you when  
15 DOE says go ahead and use a app of some kind when we  
16 called we ended up with, if we were on a Manhattan  
17 school we ended up in New Jersey at a site, not  
18 appropriate, and sometimes we would, if we were  
19 calling from a Brooklyn address we ended up in Long  
20 Island. That is not where we should be picking up  
21 food. So the whole issue of summer meals needs to be  
22 addressed with that particular legislation. I also  
23 want to just mention, of course, that we all know  
24 every summer meal is paid for by the federal  
25 government so it is a crying shame and even a crime

2 not to have every single person who is hungry. The  
3 other issue this summer was that some of the sites  
4 closed down because either a parent or a caregiver  
5 went and ate with the children. You're supposed to  
6 be 18 and under. There's something wrong on many  
7 fronts, because if you're hungry we should find a way  
8 that the caregivers also get food. These are some of  
9 the issues we're dealing. Number two is 1660. We  
10 all know that we want locally sourced food, and when  
11 I was in the City Council we passed Local Law 50,  
12 which basically said the city agencies need to  
13 purchase food grown or produced in New York State.  
14 We know the reasons - fresh, healthy, and the  
15 agencies, not just green market, not just those of us  
16 who purchase locally, but the agencies need to do it.  
17 I have to say that they are supposed to when they  
18 have made some reports about why they are or are not  
19 and they have been woefully inadequate. As an  
20 example, only 59 vendors from across the five  
21 boroughs were sent surveys. Fifty-nine were, which  
22 only 11 responded, just to give you an example, and  
23 66 vendors were sent surveys in 2018 and only three  
24 responded. The previous numbers were from 2017. So  
25 I want to say that we need to absolutely strengthen

2 all aspects of that law. And then just finally Local  
3 Law 52 requires that the system metrics report  
4 accounts for the money spent on local or regionally  
5 sourced food, and again we have a challenge because  
6 the amount of money spent on dairy, for instance, by  
7 the Department of Education is present, but not the  
8 amount spent on meat or baked goods, items that are  
9 consumed in large quantities and featured on the  
10 menu. These are some of the challenges. So yes,  
11 laws have passed, but they are not being implemented  
12 in a way that was constituted in the passage of the  
13 law. Finally, I just want to mention that the issue  
14 of school food that is organics and how does it get  
15 not to go to the landfill. So on the west side that  
16 was something we started years ago. Every single  
17 food scrap is supposed to be recycled in the  
18 appropriate way. It is not being there, not doing  
19 this program, and I have a feeling that we're going  
20 to end up in the same situation where this, these  
21 types of organics are going to end up back in the  
22 landfill and not in a way that will recycle them.  
23 That has not been done well. As you know, in our  
24 office we work from the bottom to the top of  
25 Manhattan, working with the individual senior

2 centers, eight dollars, every senior center, every  
3 individual, wants food that's fresh, seniors gets it  
4 and it's been a very, very successful program.  
5 Seniors need to have this because of carrying it is a  
6 challenge and making sure that they have the  
7 freshest. We heard earlier from the chancellor when  
8 we were meeting with him that is a possibility that  
9 Title One schools if in fact the president gets his  
10 way would not get food for lunch or breakfast. I  
11 hope that the conversation between cities around the  
12 country, farmers, will make sure that the SNAP  
13 program continues because if not over, almost 1800,  
14 um, 18,000 New Yorkers and 39,000 children would lose  
15 food in terms of their eligibility. So these are  
16 real issues that we're dealing on the national level.  
17 That's a very quick sum and I appreciate this  
18 hearing. You've had wonderful speakers, but there's  
19 a lot of work to be done.

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Truly.

21 BOROUGH PRESIDENT BREWER: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, Madam  
23 President. Make sure you're mic's on.

24 ISABEL ADAMS: Oh, sorry, first time.

25 Good afternoon, Chair Treyger and Chair Vallone and

2 council members. My name is Isabel Adams and I'm  
3 here today to testify on behalf of the Brooklyn  
4 borough president, Eric Adams. Thank you for the  
5 opportunity to testify on a package of measures to  
6 enhance food equity across the city. Food policy  
7 issues have been and remain a pillar of Borough  
8 President Adams's advocacy efforts. We have made  
9 significant strides on these issues in recent months,  
10 including the passage of Resolution 238, which called  
11 on the DOE to ban the offering of processed meat in  
12 school meals. Additionally, Meatless Mondays is now  
13 in effect across all public schools, in many city  
14 agencies, and in New York City Health and Hospitals.  
15 However, there is much more we can and, thanks,  
16 however, there is much more and must do on these  
17 issues, whether they are the Borough President  
18 Adams's constituents in Brownsville or your  
19 constituents in the Bronx, people across the city  
20 face food insecurity at alarming rates. Many of  
21 Brooklyn's residents struggle not only to get enough  
22 fresh healthy food for themselves and their families,  
23 but they also suffer from chronic diseases, such as  
24 cancer, heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes.  
25 These issues touch on, touch adults and children

2 alike, with approximately one out of every three  
3 public school-age child residing in Brooklyn, Borough  
4 President Adams stands alongside the New York City  
5 Healthy School Food Alliance in support of Intro  
6 1676. Public school students deserve equal and ample  
7 access to nutritious food, especially plant-based  
8 food options such as fruit, vegetables, and whole  
9 grains. Studies show that a healthy diet affects the  
10 mental, social, and behavioral development of school-  
11 age children, which is why it is imperative to make  
12 sure healthy food initiatives such as scratch-based  
13 cooking come to fruition. Research indicates that a  
14 whole food, plant-based diet is the healthiest eating  
15 pattern for preventing chronic illnesses. Therefore,  
16 Borough President Adams believes it is the duty of  
17 policy makers to make plant-based food accessible to  
18 all and especially to children. Based on what  
19 Borough President Adams believes are shared goals  
20 within the council, it is clear that this body should  
21 adopt Intro 1676 in order to improve the wellness of  
22 our communities by expanding access to healthy fresh  
23 foods. The borough president is dedicated to  
24 improving public health, which includes developing  
25 food policies to provide all New York City public

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2 school students with access to nutritious food. May  
3 it also be noted to this committee that in addition  
4 to Intro 1676 Borough President Adams stands in  
5 support of a number of other measures under  
6 discussion today, which will be detailed in his  
7 submitted testimony.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, and for  
9 anyone who has testimony somewhere, just please  
10 submit it so we can circulate to everyone who came  
11 today. Chair Treyger?

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, very quickly,  
13 just very quickly. Borough President, thank you, and  
14 also both offices thank you for your leadership. You  
15 had mentioned a number of very valid reasons why  
16 folks are not participate in summer meals, which I  
17 think we need to follow up with here. Has your  
18 office also heard about issues where the sites are  
19 not air conditioned and it's very hot in the summer  
20 for folks, for families, for children to eat. Have  
21 you heard that as well?

22 BOROUGH PRESIDENT BREWER: Yes, we've  
23 heard that, and believe it or not we're working,  
24 that's one issue. There are a lot of issues. Number  
25 two is with the pools you have to have a bathing suit

2 in order to be in the pool area, so if you're hungry  
3 and you go to the pool and you're not in a bathing  
4 suit that's a problem. So all of these, there's  
5 many, many issues, somewhat detailed in our material,  
6 and I think that is really a problem that NYCHA  
7 closed down some centers because the home health  
8 assistant ate. These are huge issues that have to be  
9 addressed. Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, thank  
11 you [inaudible].

12 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you to the  
13 panel. Remember two minutes for the panel, we still  
14 have nine panels to go and I promised, as does Chair  
15 Treyger, this is the first of additional hearings to  
16 come, so I'd like to call up Alexis Harrison,  
17 Michelle Villa Gomez, Suzanne Abley, and Rivka  
18 Getchkin. So come on up for the next panel.  
19 Welcome. Whoever would like to start please join.  
20 Good afternoon. Perfect.

21 ALEXIS HARRISON: Good afternoon.

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: There you go.

23 ALEXIS HARRISON: Good afternoon  
24 everyone. Thank you to the Economic Development  
25 Committee members and Chair Councilman Paul Vallone

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2 for the opportunity to testify today. My name is  
3 Alexis Harrison. I am the partnerships coordinator  
4 at Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation,  
5 representing our center for healthy neighborhoods.  
6 We're also, I am also a member of the New York City  
7 Good Food Purchasing Program Coalition. Restoration  
8 supports the passing of legislation Intros 1660 to  
9 adopt a good food purchasing policy to significantly  
10 shift the food procurement of city agencies.  
11 Restoration's mission is to relentlessly pursue  
12 strategies to close gaps in wealth and health in  
13 central Brooklyn. Through our work and our programs  
14 we are working every day to collectively foster  
15 economic self-sufficiency, enhance family stability,  
16 improve health and the environment, and transform the  
17 neighborhood into a safe, vibrant place to live and  
18 work. Restoration joined the Good Food Purchasing  
19 Program Coalition as it aligns with our goals and  
20 work to transform our current food system to better  
21 support the health and economic mobility of the  
22 central Brooklyn communities we work with along with  
23 the low-income communities throughout the city. If  
24 passed, the Good Food Purchasing Program legislation  
25 will ensure that the decisions about the over 820

2 million dollars spent on food contracts by the city  
3 agencies each year will go beyond considering if a  
4 vendor is simply the cheapest the option, but will  
5 evaluate a vendor from a more holistic set of values  
6 that we as a community and the city need to codify to  
7 ensure a better life for our most vulnerable  
8 residents. These values include whether a vendor's  
9 practices support the local economy, whether a  
10 vendor's labor practices are ethical, whether food  
11 sources meets nutritional and other health standards  
12 and that considerations about both environmental  
13 impacts and animal welfare are taken into account.  
14 Given the scale of city contracts, if adopted this  
15 legislation would have impacts far beyond the city  
16 agencies. The good food purchasing program has the  
17 framework to critically change the purchasing  
18 practices of our agencies that better support the  
19 communities that interact with them. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you, and  
21 today we were talking about creating a green  
22 certification program based on that. So  
23 congratulations.

24 ALEXIS HARRISON: Great.  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: You're welcome.

3 Next?

4 ROCIGLY TACHO: Yes. Hello all, and good  
5 afternoon. First and foremost, I'd like to thank the  
6 chair of the Committee on Education, Paul Vallone,  
7 the bill sponsor of Introduction number 1660, Andrew  
8 Cohen, and all members of the committees here for  
9 providing an opportunity for us testify on this  
10 matter. My name is Rocigly Tacho and I'm the  
11 director of the New York City Good Food Purchasing  
12 Policy Campaign and I'm working here with community  
13 food advocates. We work in close partnership with  
14 the Food Chain Workers Alliance, the CUNY Urban Food  
15 Policy Institute and the Center for Good Food  
16 Purchasing. Together we've been building a robust  
17 coalition of local and national food system, food  
18 systems advocates and experts that align with the  
19 five values of the Good Food Purchasing Program.  
20 That's local economies, valued work force, animal  
21 welfare, environmental sustainability, and nutrition.  
22 Many of these phenomenal experts and advocates are  
23 here in this room today to lend their support to this  
24 bill. Our city serves approximately 240 million  
25 meals across its public food-serving agencies. These

2 agencies serve some of our most vulnerable and food  
3 insecurity populations, including, but not limited  
4 to, senior citizens, students, the homeless,  
5 incarcerated individuals, and those under medical  
6 care. While instrumental, the impact of the Good  
7 Food Purchasing Program in New York City goes beyond  
8 that of the consumer. Our current food system, the  
9 largest employment sector in the United States with  
10 over 21.5 million workers, is plagued with myriad  
11 inequities, which I go into further detail into the  
12 further testimony that I'm offering and submitting.  
13 Considering our tremendous purchasing power, in 2018  
14 alone, for example, looking at our top 22 food  
15 vendors, New York City spent close to 62 million in  
16 food contracts, excluding the DOE contracts, and  
17 approximately 820 million in food contracts including  
18 the DOE. And that's only our top 22 vendors. New  
19 York City is especially primed and uniquely  
20 positioned to becoming the next leader in this  
21 country, taking a firm stance and declaring that good  
22 food relies on a values-driven food system, one that  
23 is ecologically and economically viable, sustainable,  
24 truly racially just and socially responsible, humane,  
25 safe and teeming with nutritious and culturally

2 relevant foods. This is the vision of the local,  
3 regional, national, and global food system that we're  
4 referring to when we advocate for this legislation.  
5 We can set a major precedent in this country with the  
6 codification of Intro 1660. While a number of city  
7 agencies, including the DOE and Health and Hospitals,  
8 for example, have already undergone the preliminary  
9 Good Food Purchasing Program baseline reporting and  
10 action planning, we recognize that codifying and  
11 adopting the Good Food Purchasing Policy is  
12 instrumental to the longevity, the continued  
13 commitment, and the participation in the Good Food  
14 Purchasing Program on the part of the city and our  
15 city's food servicing agencies, no matter a change in  
16 leadership. The Good Food Purchasing Program  
17 Coalition has been leveraging our expertise to  
18 continue working with the City Council, most recently  
19 in the form of the suggested modifications that we  
20 are submitting alongside our testimony. We look  
21 forward to continuing to work with the City Council  
22 to ensure that we codify the strongest and most  
23 substantive policy and with the agencies to ensure  
24 that we support them as they move through  
25 successfully implementing the Good Food Purchasing

2 Program. We thank Council Member Andrew Cohen and  
3 Speaker Corey Johnson for their continued leadership  
4 on Intro 1660 and we thank you for this opportunity  
5 again to testify.

6 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you for your  
7 work.

8 ROCIGLY TACHO: Thank you.

9 SUSANNA DALEY: Good afternoon. And  
10 thank you to the chairs and members of the committee.  
11 My name is Susanna Daley and I'm representing today  
12 the Food Chain Workers Alliance and speaking in  
13 support of Intro 1660, otherwise known as the Good  
14 Food Purchasing Program. Our alliance is a  
15 binational coalition of 31 worker-based organizations  
16 working in the food economy. As many of you may  
17 know, the food economy is the largest economy in the  
18 country, employing at least 1.5 million workers. We  
19 collectively represent about 375,000 workers around  
20 the country and in Canada. It's not only the largest  
21 economy, but it's also one of the most exploitative and  
22 food workers suffer themselves from food insecurity  
23 at double the rate of any work force, and that has to  
24 do with the exploitative nature of the food economy,  
25 which doesn't just impact workers, but all the

2 consumers who consume the food and impact the  
3 environment, impact animals, and impact all of the  
4 sectors that are mentioned in the five value  
5 categories as part of GFPP. Our members work to  
6 change conditions for front-line food workers through  
7 organizing and policy innovation, and the Good Food  
8 Purchasing Program is one example of that policy  
9 innovation. GFPP is the leading national food  
10 procurement model. It provides a metric-based,  
11 flexible framework and a set of tools to create great  
12 transparency and accessibility in public food  
13 procurement. It encourages large public institutions  
14 to direct their buying power toward the five core  
15 values already stated. The Food Chain Workers  
16 Alliance helped to develop GFPP almost a decade ago  
17 and now provides direct support to community leaders  
18 working with their local institutions to adopt GFPP  
19 in cities and counties around the country. First  
20 adopted in the city of Los Angeles in 2012, GFPP is  
21 currently operating in 32 institutions in 15 cities  
22 with more than one billion in aggregate data, in  
23 aggregate food purchasing. This program has been a  
24 strong tool for large public institutions to support  
25 justice for food workers. Since its adoption in LA,

2 nearly 400 workers in Los Angeles County now have  
3 higher wages, better health benefits, and stronger  
4 workplace protections. Furthermore, adoption of GFPP  
5 standards has given the LA school district the  
6 ability to direct about 30 million annually to local  
7 food purchasing to create more than 220 more well-  
8 paying jobs in the food chain, to reduce purchases of  
9 industrially produced meat by nearly a third,  
10 decreasing carbon footprint in water usage and to  
11 shift US poultry production through the negotiations  
12 of new contracts. I'll end by saying that our  
13 experience in all of these cities, which I can name  
14 if you're interested, tells us that communities want  
15 greater transparency in food sourcing practices and  
16 these standards will enable buying power to provide  
17 that transparency while also transforming our food  
18 system to address systematic inequities. Our  
19 experience also tells us that the key to success in a  
20 program like this has been policy adoption, which  
21 allows for our public institutions to commit to  
22 ongoing participation regardless if when leadership  
23 changes, and also participation from community  
24 stakeholders in shaping the policy and implementing  
25 the policy. We put our support behind these efforts

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2 and as my colleague mentioned we've, we are  
3 submitting, along with the coalition, some important  
4 and meaningful additions to the bill that we hope  
5 will be considered carefully. Um, we want to  
6 thank...

7 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I need you to  
8 conclude dear, I've said three times, please.

9 SUSANNA DALEY: I want to thank you.  
10 That's it.

11 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you very  
12 much, thank you very much. Our conclusions tend to  
13 go a little bit longer we're going to be here for a  
14 long, long time, so let's see what we can do. Thank  
15 you, dear.

16 MICHELLE VILLA GOMEZ: My name is  
17 Michelle Villa Gomez. I'm the New York City  
18 legislative senior director for the ASPCA. I'm going  
19 to...

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Welcome back.

21 MICHELLE VILLA GOMEZ: ...cut it a little  
22 short. It's nice to see you. It's nice to be at a  
23 hearing where the administration says yes to  
24 everything.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Yeah, that doesn't  
3 happen all the time.

4 MICHELLE VILLA GOMEZ: It doesn't happen  
5 so much with our stuff. But I want to thank you for  
6 the opportunity to testify in support of Intro 1660,  
7 which would create this Good Food Purchasing Program  
8 in New York City. The ASPCA is a national partner to  
9 the GFPP. We helped craft its animal welfare  
10 standards and we support GFPP efforts around the  
11 country. We've prioritized GFPP given its  
12 significant potential to improve the lives of nearly  
13 10 billion land animals raised for meat, milk, and  
14 eggs in the United States each year. GFPP offers a  
15 practical alternative to many of the welfare programs  
16 plaguing animals in today's factory farming model,  
17 where animals are forced to endure conditions that  
18 are cruel and unnatural. There is little to no  
19 welfare oversight on most farms. There is no scheme  
20 in place for on-site inspections and auditing, which  
21 GFPP aims to add back into the food system. Public  
22 and consumer sentiment has increasingly turned  
23 against these practices in favor of higher welfare  
24 products. Public institutions are wonderfully  
25 positioned to take up this call, serving as crucial

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2 partners in building a new and more humane food  
3 system. GFPP offers two avenues for improving animal  
4 welfare. Institutions may opt to direct a percentage  
5 of their food dollars towards animal welfare  
6 certified products whose standards are verified by  
7 independent audits, or they can simply reduce their  
8 total volume of meat, milk, and eggs purchased. If  
9 the GFPP is enacted in New York City either option  
10 would promote significant and critically needed  
11 improvements for animals in our food system. We  
12 believe all animals deserve respectful and  
13 compassionate treatment. GFPP offers cities the  
14 opportunity to build on these sentiments by using  
15 their purchasing power to commitment to standards  
16 that impact food production all the way down the  
17 line, including how animals are raised. In adopting  
18 this forward-thinking program for New York City's  
19 public institutions you have the opportunity to set a  
20 high standard, not just for food but for underlying  
21 values like the thoughtful treatment of people, the  
22 planet and animals. So with all of this in mind, we  
23 look forward to working with the council and as part  
24 of the coalition working in New York we've submitted  
25 amendments for your consideration. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Perfect. Thank you  
3 very much. Thank you to the panel and all your hard  
4 work. The next panel, and I apologize to Allison, I  
5 didn't see there was another student here from CUNY.  
6 So Allison Gado or Gato is here, if she can come up.  
7 Greg Silverman from the West Side Campaign House,  
8 Joel Berg from a Hungry-Free America, Michael Higgins  
9 from the Food Pantry of Columbia, and Warren Phillips  
10 from the Food Bank for New York City. Thanks for  
11 your patience. Whoever would like to start. Allison  
12 [inaudible].

13 ALLISON GATO: Thank you. There's  
14 actually a bunch us from CUNY here...

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: [inaudible] CUNY.

16 ALLISON GATO: ...testifying. So I'm  
17 testifying in support of Intro 1659. Thank you for  
18 allowing me to testify today. The number of older  
19 adults in New York City is expected to rise from 1.6  
20 to 1.8 million in the next couple of years. Between  
21 2015 and 2017 10.5% of this population was living in  
22 food-insecure households. Older adults facing food  
23 insecurity are 78% more likely to have depression,  
24 55% more likely to have asthma, and 40% more likely  
25 to experience CHP. [sneezes] Sorry. SNAP is

2 essential in reducing food insecurity by providing  
3 income for food resources can be spent on other  
4 necessitates, which is important when older adults  
5 are choosing between food, rent, healthcare, and  
6 medications. Unfortunately, only 71% of older  
7 eligible seniors are enrolled. Barriers to  
8 enrollment include a lack of knowledge about the  
9 program, limited mobility, and the perceived stigmas  
10 around receiving public benefits. Coordination  
11 between the Department of Social Services and the  
12 Department for the Aging will facilitate increased  
13 enrollment by disassembling those barriers and  
14 identifying enrolling eligible seniors. This will  
15 ultimately lead to better health outcomes. But  
16 beyond this is also provides benefits for the city  
17 and state by reducing healthcare spending and  
18 increasing economic benefits because every one dollar  
19 spent in SNAP benefits generates \$1.79 in economic  
20 activity. Thank you again for letting me testify.

21 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: No, thank you and  
22 God bless you for all the sneezing. Whoever would  
23 like to go? Go ahead.

24 JOEL BERG: I'll go. I'm Joel Berg. I'm  
25 CEO of Hunger-Free America.

2 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: There you go,  
3 Joel. Sometimes you've just got to jump right in.

4 JOEL BERG: I've submitted very extensive  
5 testimony for the record, but I want to focus on  
6 school breakfast. The bottom line is the city is  
7 still not meeting Mayor de Blasio's promise to make  
8 this available in all schools and even more  
9 problematically the city is probably violating the  
10 new state law mandating this. Just to strip away the  
11 rhetoric from this morning, state law mandates that  
12 1100 of the highest-needs New York City schools  
13 provide breakfast after the bell. It doesn't say  
14 leave it up to the principals if they feel like doing  
15 it, it mandates it. And the explanation today that  
16 well, we're meeting that requirement by doing  
17 breakfast in the first period class, in the first  
18 period lunch rooms really violates the spirit of the  
19 law, if not the letter of the law. The whole reason  
20 that New York City has the lowest school breakfast  
21 participation rate out of any big city in the United  
22 States is because kids are not going to go to the  
23 lunch room after the class starts. And if the  
24 concern is that you're losing instructional time,  
25 then why in the world would you want the students to

2 have to go to the lunch room instead of in the  
3 classroom? That's number one. Number two, they  
4 said, oh, we're adding 150 schools, up to 700. Well,  
5 that's still 400 short of 1100, but as you ask  
6 follow-up questions I ask you to press them even  
7 more. They're listing the number of schools. Many  
8 of those schools are not doing it in all their  
9 classrooms, are not doing it even in the majority of  
10 the classrooms. So they're really not meeting the  
11 spirit of the law. They're basically giving  
12 principals veto power. Some principals are very in  
13 touch with their communities. One principal told me  
14 there's no hunger in their school and that's just not  
15 true. I just want to read you something directly  
16 from state law. It says "In determining service  
17 delivery model for breakfast in the classroom,  
18 schools shall consult with teachers, parents,  
19 students, and members of the community." That's  
20 directly from the state statute. We heard the city  
21 DOE say at length how they're consulting with  
22 principals. I did not hear a syllable about how  
23 they're meeting the law to consult with community  
24 members, with parents, with teachers. I'd urge the  
25 council not only to make sure they're using your

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2 funding, but to make sure they're actually carrying  
3 out the law. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

5 JEFF GREGG SILVERMAN: My name is Jeff  
6 Gregg Silverman. I'm the executive director of the  
7 West Side Campaign Against Hunger. Thank you,  
8 Chairpersons Vallone, Treyger, and Stephen Levin, as  
9 well as members of the City Council for holding  
10 today's joint hearing on legislation advancing food  
11 equity in New York City. I'm here today representing  
12 the West Side Campaign Against Hunger, WSCAH, and our  
13 community of almost 12,000 families who come to us  
14 from across New York City to gain access to healthy  
15 food and supportive services. Founded in 1979, we  
16 are the country's first supermarket-style  
17 multiservice food pantry and one of the largest  
18 emergency food provides in the city. We alleviate  
19 hunger by ensuring all New Yorkers have access with  
20 dignity to a choice of healthy food and supportive  
21 services. In the last year we provided over 1.6  
22 million pounds of food, which included over 600,000  
23 pounds of fresh fruit and fresh vegetables to nearly  
24 12,000 households. Our customers are overjoyed that  
25 over 41% of our produce, product, is fresh and this

2 is unheard of anywhere in New York City, unheard of  
3 across the country, and after the last conference I  
4 was at talking to people in the UK it was incredible  
5 to see that that could even be thought of anywhere in  
6 the world. Fresh, healthy, appetizing produce helps  
7 us battle not only short-term food insecurity but  
8 supports the health and well-being of families in  
9 need. As the Speaker himself said, access to  
10 adequate nutritious food is a human right. EFAP, the  
11 Emergency Food Assistance Program, has been touted as  
12 a huge win in New York City with its 22 million  
13 dollar baseline in the budget. But let's be clear.  
14 The 41% fresh, healthy, nutritious produce we  
15 distribute at WSCAH did not come from EFAP. EFAP  
16 distributes 22 million dollars of processed foods to  
17 New Yorkers in need. There is no ability within EFAP  
18 to give any choice of fresh product to any single New  
19 Yorker, and this is a tragedy for the health and  
20 dignity of our entire New York City community. We  
21 remind city council members of the state of EFAP as  
22 an example of the importance of the City of New York  
23 to focus its efforts on a joined-up approach, a  
24 collective action to change the food system in New  
25 York City. While we support the passage of all the

2 worthy bills being considered today, it's where we  
3 think of number 1664 in relationship to requiring a  
4 food policy where we formulate a 10-year food policy  
5 joined-up plan. I'm here highlighting the importance  
6 of these sides in order to give a program that moves  
7 forward in a joined-up approach. Truth be told, our  
8 WSCAH community of 22,000 customers care less about  
9 plans and bills. Our community cares first about  
10 feeling safe and supported and our city, state, and  
11 federal government are not taking care of this. Over  
12 73% of our customers who are part of WSCAH are  
13 Latinx, many first-generation immigrants, and in  
14 sanctuary cities such as New York they don't feel  
15 safe. Just last week three customers asked to get  
16 taken off of SNAP and Medicaid due to fear about  
17 immigration issues. In New York City these friends,  
18 neighborhoods, colleagues, are refusing public sector  
19 benefits and need more support. In short, I'm simply  
20 saying we need number 1664 to have a larger 10-year  
21 food policy plan with an Office of Food Policy, of  
22 course, and in order to have things like the Good  
23 Food Purchasing Program and urban agriculture  
24 efforts, but we need to have a joined-up approach if  
25 we're actually going to fight food insecurity,

2 hunger, food waste, agriculture issues, food equity  
3 issues. So thank you very much.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

5 MICHAEL EGGIN: Good afternoon. My name  
6 is Michael Eggins. I'm the co-founder and chair of  
7 The Food Pantry at Columbia. We are the first and  
8 only student-run pantry, full-time pantry, in any of  
9 the Ivies. I stress that because I know a lot of  
10 the, a lot of the focus is on public schools,  
11 especially in relationship to Resolution 1024. The  
12 focus is on expanding the SNAP benefits for all  
13 public school students, ah, public school colleagues  
14 and universities. I would actually propose that we  
15 extend that even further to be all students that are  
16 in higher education. A brief background of The Food  
17 Pantry at Columbia is in my testimony, as to what we  
18 have done to date. As of the last three-and-a-half  
19 years we have served over 2300 disbursements to 95%  
20 of the university to date. We, our data is even more  
21 credible because we also have specific individual  
22 usage for each individual school, so we can, we have  
23 the data to prove that this is not just a specific  
24 school issue or a socioeconomic issue. This is an  
25 issue that plagues the entire university. And

2 because of our partnership with the Food Bank for New  
3 York City we're going to have the opportunity to get  
4 trained on and provide assistance with SNAP  
5 applications. The problem with that is we're not  
6 going to be the ones obviously making the decisions  
7 as to whether or not an individual is eligible. But  
8 then also what we found out that of the approximately  
9 70% of the individuals who are interested or need  
10 SNAP benefits through our quantitative data research,  
11 only approximately about 18% of those individuals, or  
12 maybe about one out of those seven, will actually  
13 qualify and get SNAP benefits. One of the reasons  
14 why we've been holding off for so long in making that  
15 initiative is simply because of the fact that we  
16 don't want to exclude the other 82% or the other six  
17 out of the seven individuals who need those benefits.  
18 So my hope, and again...

19 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And that's only  
20 going to get worse when the federal changes...

21 MICHAEL EGGINIS: It will absolutely get  
22 worse.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And Michael, your  
24 data is here, as long as everyone else is, so if

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2 anyone else wants those great reports that are being  
3 submitted we have them here.

4 MICHAEL EGGINIS: Exactly, so, I mean,  
5 basically that is, that is my testimony and hopefully  
6 if this is something that could be addressed I would  
7 love to be part of that conversation to expand  
8 Resolution 1024, to not only public schools but  
9 private schools as well. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

11 LAUREN PHILLIPS: Hi, good afternoon  
12 Chairs Vallone, Levin, and Treyger, and members of  
13 the New York City Council. My name is Lauren  
14 Phillips and I am the government relations manager at  
15 Food Bank for New York City. Food Bank has submitted  
16 extensive written testimony, but I'd like to briefly  
17 thank you to the council and the speaker for  
18 proposing legislation to codify efforts to build food  
19 equity in New York City. I'd also like to take this  
20 opportunity to recognize two particular pieces of  
21 legislation in this food equity package. First, an  
22 amendment from Council Members Rose, Kallos, and Chin  
23 challenge the code for the, changing the code for the  
24 Department of Education and requiring that they share  
25 summer meals information, not only on their website

2 and through partnership with elected officials, but  
3 mailed directly to the homes of New York City  
4 students before the start of the summer meals program  
5 each year. Food Bank believes in the New York City  
6 Council summer meals program as a powerful tool for  
7 ensuring access to high-quality, nutritious food for  
8 our students when school is not in session. It is  
9 why we raise awareness around summer hunger and why  
10 we have posted summer meal sites at our community  
11 kitchen in Harlem for the last several years. It is  
12 also why we as well as so many of the other people in  
13 this room today were partnered with Manhattan Borough  
14 President Gail Brewer's summer meals task force to  
15 spread information to our network of nearly a  
16 thousand emergency food programs. We fully support  
17 this legislation and applaud the sponsoring council  
18 members for their attention to this crucial program.  
19 Secondly, an amendment to the administrative code for  
20 the Department of the Aging to investigate barriers  
21 faced by seniors in according SNAP benefits. Council  
22 Member Chin's legislation would only, set up a plan  
23 to study these barriers but directs the city to  
24 partner with the leaders at DFTA to find ways for  
25 seniors to overcome these barriers. We know many of

2 our seniors face increasing rents and medical costs  
3 while their incomes stay fixed. This legislation,  
4 sponsored by this council's champion for seniors,  
5 Council Member Chin, will help to identify and lift  
6 those barriers to ensure that even more eligible  
7 seniors can access SNAP, which is the first line of  
8 defense against hunger. I'm running out of time, but  
9 I also would like to highlight the two pieces, the  
10 two resolutions, from Council Member Louis. We  
11 support both of those. [inaudible] should absolutely  
12 expand access to SNAP to public school students, look  
13 into the private school, I hadn't thought about that,  
14 thank you, um, but also the resolution calling on the  
15 governor to allow for the exception of hot meals to  
16 be produced for the homeless and people living with  
17 disabilities. It's quite difficult to take groceries  
18 home and prepare them if you don't have a home. So  
19 we absolutely support that piece of legislation, and  
20 again thank you so much. We are so honored to live  
21 in a city with a council that believes in the power  
22 of food equity. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you. Thank  
24 you, everyone. And Chair Treyger is going to take  
25 over with the next panel, so thank you everyone.

2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Chair  
3 Vallone. Next panel, we'll call Mark, I think, from  
4 NRDC, David French, Jamie McBeth, Alicia Rodriguez,  
5 and Jerome Nathaniel. You may begin.

6 MARK EISMAN: Good afternoon. My name is  
7 Mark Eisman. I'm a senior attorney and the New York  
8 regional director of the National Resources Defense  
9 Council. Food is the single strongest lever to  
10 optimize human health and environmental  
11 sustainability on earth. This striking statement  
12 comes from a recently released report by scientist  
13 from more than 16 countries. And we commend the  
14 council for having this hearing on this important  
15 issue, and also to be joined with such amazing  
16 advocates working on the front lines of food and  
17 agriculture. NRDC has worked for many years on  
18 environmental issues and over the last decade has  
19 focused on regional food issues here in New York.  
20 Instead of addressing the specifics of these great  
21 bills, we're just going to emphasize three  
22 overarching themes in the next one minute and twenty  
23 seconds. First, the importance of transparency and  
24 meaningful stakeholder engagement. Second, the  
25 central role of food in addressing the climate

2 crisis, and third, the power of food to create wealth  
3 in low-income communities and communities of color.

4 With respect to the first point, fixing our food  
5 system requires listening carefully to our friends  
6 and neighborhoods who are most impacted by the  
7 current broken industrial food system and it's  
8 important that the city do that in all aspects of  
9 this type of work. Our second point is that any new  
10 legislation should more explicitly link food to the  
11 city's ambitious and urgent climate goals.

12 Worldwide, as many people in the room know, food is  
13 responsible for 25% or more of greenhouse gas  
14 emissions, and so what we eat and how we grow and how  
15 we distribute is very, very important. In two days  
16 we're having a rally here on the streets of Manhattan  
17 and so the opportunity now to sort of more explicitly  
18 talk about how we can use this legislation to meet  
19 the city's climate goals is important. Just to give  
20 one fact, beans and lentils use 34 times less, are  
21 less carbon-intensive than beef. And then the last  
22 point is that we believe the city, including through  
23 this legislation, could harness the power of food to  
24 reinvest and build wealth in low-income communities  
25 and communities of color. To solve these problems,

2 well, I'll just say this with time running out that  
3 we should, the city and the City Council legislation  
4 should engage with residents not just as consumers,  
5 ah, but also as owners and entrepreneurs in the food  
6 system as a way of creating wealth in the community.  
7 And we stand ready to work with all the advocates and  
8 the City Council to strengthen and move forward these  
9 bills. Thank you.

10 JAMIE MCBETH: Good afternoon. I'm Jamie  
11 McBeth, director of food and nutrition at Fortune  
12 Society, where we help formerly incarcerated people  
13 successfully reenter society because 90% of them will  
14 be coming home. So we want to see that they have  
15 good housing, jobs, and access to healthy food. We  
16 are, I am testifying today in support of 1660.  
17 What's important for us for people to know is that  
18 according to data from Just, that was acquired from  
19 Just Food, there are about 100 black farmers on the  
20 more than 36,000 black farmers on the more than  
21 36,000 farms in New York State. So while we value  
22 local agriculture what that means if we're limiting  
23 purchasing to just New York State we're limiting, um,  
24 purchasing to, ah, non, farmers who are not of color.  
25 So just as the previous speaker was speaking to the

2 possibilities for economic development that very much  
3 lies true for our population who is  
4 disproportionately black and brown. So in GFPP we  
5 just urge that the language is thoughtfully codified  
6 in legislation where possibly, um, GFPP could  
7 incentivize farms and farmers who hire formerly  
8 incarcerated people and support job training and  
9 entrepreneurship programs at the various farms on New  
10 York State prisons perhaps and certainly, um, look to  
11 include black and brown farmers and incentivize them  
12 to be able to be more, so that we can change what  
13 local looks like so it's more, a more inclusive  
14 picture. As a dietitian, what that means for me is  
15 the possibility that there are more, ah, heritage and  
16 culturally appropriate foods being grown locally  
17 which in and of itself will act as motivation for  
18 people of color to purchase more foods locally and in  
19 that way and improve their health. It's hard for  
20 people to think about, ah, serving healthy fresh food  
21 at prisons because many people think that it should  
22 be a punitive system. We at Fortune think that  
23 taking away someone's freedom is the punishment and  
24 that prison is a point of rehabilitation. So by what  
25 we put on their plate we would be teaching them how

2 to eat healthy and hopefully bring that back to the  
3 community. It's unfortunate that we see that when  
4 many young people, black and brown people from  
5 impoverished communities are talking about going  
6 upstate, they're talking about visiting prisons or  
7 their uncles in prisons, but we hope that it's  
8 visiting their uncles in farms and we think that  
9 language and GFPP could work towards that. Thank  
10 you.

11 STEVEN FRENCH: Hi, my name is Steven  
12 French. I am the directory of philanthropy and  
13 healthy food initiatives at Lenox Hill Neighborhood  
14 House. I'd like to thank the members of the  
15 committee for the opportunity to provide testimony  
16 today. Lenox Hill Neighborhood House supports all of  
17 the bills from the agenda today. I am here  
18 specifically in support of Intro number 1660 in  
19 relationship to creating a good food purchasing  
20 program. Lenox Hill Neighborhood House is a 125-  
21 year-old settlement house on the east side of  
22 Manhattan that operates a farm to institution  
23 program. We scratch cook 400,000 meals annually  
24 through city-funded programs, including senior  
25 centers, a homeless shelter, Head Start program,

2 after-school, summer campaign, and Alzheimer's day  
3 program. We serve 60% vegetarian meals using 95%  
4 fresh food, 30% to 40% of it locally sourced, and  
5 we're the largest institutional customer of  
6 Greenmarket Co., serving or distributing 56 tons of  
7 local food annually through our kitchens and Grow NYC  
8 food box. In 2015 we launched a program called the  
9 Teaching Kitchen at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House to  
10 teach other nonprofit organizations serving  
11 government-funded meals to serve more fresh, healthy  
12 and local food without raising costs. The goals to  
13 this year-long training and technical assistance  
14 program are to improve the health of low-income New  
15 Yorkers to localize New York's institutional food  
16 systems and to give food workers the skills and the  
17 knowledge to create a healthier, more sustainable,  
18 and more equitable food system. In four years the  
19 Teaching Kitchen has trained 104 nonprofit programs  
20 serving 8 million meals annually to low-income New  
21 Yorkers, often those most at risk for diet-related  
22 disease. The Good Food Purchasing Program would help  
23 New York to move towards the goals that Lenox Hill  
24 Neighborhood House and our partners work toward every  
25 day and would support the city's health economy,

2 sustainability, and equitability. Lenox Hill  
3 Neighborhood House supports Intro 1660. We thank you  
4 for your consideration of this bill and hope that the  
5 city will adopt the Good Food Purchasing Program.

6 ALICIA RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon. Thank  
7 you to the chairs and members of the committee. My  
8 name is Alicia Rodriguez and I am the director of the  
9 Land and Sea Institute, a nonprofit advocating  
10 sustainable farming practices and meat reduction  
11 policies. I am also a member of the New York City  
12 Good Food Purchasing Program Coalition. I am  
13 submitting testimony in support of Intro number 1660,  
14 which would establish a Good Food Purchasing Program  
15 in New York City. As scientific research indicates,  
16 humanity is on the verge of experiencing catastrophic  
17 loss from climate change. Our food system is both  
18 contributing to and affected by environmental  
19 degradation. Each year the animal agriculture  
20 industry slaughters upwards of 70 billion land  
21 animals and pulls over 2 trillion fish from the sea  
22 globally. This industry is a leading contributor to  
23 deforestation, methane and carbon emissions, loss of  
24 wildlife, and collapse of ocean ecosystems. In  
25 addition to plaguing the environment, animal

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2 agriculture is causing a tremendous amount of animal  
3 suffering. Animals live in conditions on farms vary  
4 dramatically from one farm to the next with limited  
5 government regulations and oversight. Some farms  
6 have 100 animals, and others have tens of thousands.  
7 Many are kept in large buildings with no windows  
8 where they are squished into cages and crates and  
9 never see natural light or feel grass under their  
10 feet. The current food purchasing policies in New  
11 York City do not allow agencies to fully take into  
12 account the environmental animal welfare conditions  
13 on farms when evaluating procurement bids. With the  
14 GFPP agencies can set food purchasing goals for  
15 sustainability and animal welfare, along with the  
16 other value categories. Most farms are already  
17 familiar with the third-party animal welfare  
18 certifications and the GFPP standards, and agencies  
19 can use these standards to incentivize farms to shift  
20 towards higher welfare practices to stay  
21 comprehensive. In sum, Intro number 1660 offers a  
22 holistic, proven way to improve the food system in  
23 the city and New York State. It also gives New  
24 Yorkers a heightened level of transparency into food  
25 purchasing so we can see which types of environmental

2 and animal welfare standards the city's funds  
3 support. Thank you for hearing my testimony and I  
4 respectfully request the council to support Intro  
5 1660.

6 JOHN NATHANIEL: Good evening,  
7 Chairperson Levin, Treyger, Vallone, and members of  
8 the council for holding this very important hearing  
9 today on food equity. My name is John Nathaniel and  
10 I'm the assistant director of food and government  
11 relations at City Harvest. This year we will rescue  
12 some 64 million pounds of perfectly edible food, half  
13 of which being fresh produce, and redistributing it  
14 to our network of 400-plus emergency food programs  
15 that directly service the 1.2 million New Yorkers  
16 that face food insecurity. First and foremost, City  
17 Harvest lauds the council for really, um, offering up  
18 this very comprehensive approach to food equity  
19 across our city that goes above and beyond the  
20 emergency food system in many ways that we cannot do  
21 it alone. In particular, I want to draw attention to  
22 the food waste prevention bills, 1681 and 1683, and  
23 in our written testimony you will see that City  
24 Harvest speaks to our partnership with the Department  
25 of Sanitation and the Department of Health and Mental

2 Hygiene in which we rescued over 120,000 pounds of  
3 perfectly edible food through the Food Vendor  
4 Confiscation Project, a program that the city started  
5 roughly two or three years ago. We welcome the intro  
6 and the bill and City Harvest is looking forward to  
7 being a thought partner and a part of the  
8 conversation, in particular as we're thinking about  
9 food waste prevention at the Department of Education.  
10 Furthermore, you'll also see in our testimony that we  
11 speak to really the large network of anti-hunger  
12 organizations and food system advocates that are  
13 doing this work. City Harvest is also a member of  
14 the Good Food Purchasing Program Coalition and we  
15 also advocate with community food advocates to build  
16 participation in the school lunch and school  
17 breakfast as a means that really kind of goes above  
18 and beyond the emergency food system to focus on the  
19 quality of food and to do a values-driven approach to  
20 really empower the food system with the people that  
21 work in this system and the people that receive the  
22 food. In our written testimony we also allude to the  
23 possibility of a CNR bill, [inaudible] nutrition  
24 reauthorization, that may very well be on the purview  
25 of this fall in Congress and the opportunities that

2 pose for the city to align some of their priorities  
3 for scratch cooking even on the congressional level.

4 Thank you for this time.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you all, to  
6 the entire panel, for your important work and  
7 advocacy. There is much more work we have to do and  
8 truly appreciate also your comments, particularly  
9 about our young people and opportunities for all  
10 farmers, not just some, truly appreciate that. Thank  
11 you very much. The next panel we'll call up, Ranica  
12 Trent, Claire Raffle, Lisette Rubio, Edwina Luke, and  
13 Nicholas Freudenberg. Whenever you're ready you may  
14 begin.

15 RANICA TRENT: Good afternoon. My name  
16 is Ranica Trent and I'm the project director of the  
17 Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education, and  
18 Policy, Program and Nutrition, Teachers' College,  
19 Columbia University. Thank you to the chairpersons  
20 as well as members of the City Council on Economic  
21 Development, Education, and General Welfare for  
22 holding today's joint hearing on legislation to  
23 advance food equity in New York City. We support the  
24 passage of all bills being considered in today's  
25 hearing and are submitting written testimony on a

2 variety of bills. This oral testimony is in regards  
3 to Intro 1676, requiring the New York City DOE to  
4 report on the efforts to implement scratch-cooked  
5 food service. Over the past 18 months the Tisch Food  
6 Center at the invitation of and with some funding  
7 from the Office of Food and Nutrition Services has  
8 conducted an evaluation, as this report calls for,  
9 and will release that report shortly. This  
10 evaluation has three primary goals - to document the  
11 system changes that occurred in the two kitchens that  
12 were part of the scratch-cooked pilot during the 2018  
13 and '19 school year, to understand how a wide range  
14 of stakeholders experience the scratch-cooked pilot  
15 and three based on lessons learned by this pilot to  
16 provide implementation guidance, to facilitate  
17 expansion of scratch-cooked food service across all  
18 New York City schools. Our report reveals the  
19 complex system changes that occurred during the pilot  
20 and provides guidance to expand scratch-cooked food  
21 service to all New York City students. We would be  
22 happy to provide copies of this evaluation report to  
23 members of the City Council.

24 CLAIRE RAFFLE: I'm Claire Raffle. I am  
25 a colleague of Ranica's at the Tisch Food Center at

2 Teachers' College. Thank you so much. I echo all  
3 her things as well. The Tisch Food Center cultivates  
4 research about the connections between a just,  
5 sustainable food system and healthy eating and  
6 translates into recommendations and resources for  
7 educators, policy makers, and community advocates,  
8 and we really focus on schools as levers for learning  
9 and social change. While most New Yorkers want to  
10 eat well, we are challenged to do so. Today we are  
11 inundated by tens of thousands of new food products,  
12 billions spent marketing highly processed, minimally  
13 nutritious foods, and confusing health claims. Add  
14 to that mix the lack of time, money, and access which  
15 many New Yorkers face and it's understandable why so  
16 many of us struggle to eat well. The current  
17 epidemic of diet-related diseases and persistent food  
18 insecurity disproportionately impacting low-income  
19 communities of color gives testament to this  
20 struggle. We must do more to empower our city's  
21 eaters, which such a pressing need for great food and  
22 nutrition education alongside accessible and  
23 affordable healthy food. This is the time for the  
24 City Council to take bold action to ensure food  
25 equity for all New Yorkers. Well coordinated, well

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2 resourced, and equity-focused New York City policies  
3 are critical for reducing health care costs,  
4 providing jobs, saving our environment, and  
5 increasing the quality of life for our citizens. We  
6 support the passage of all the bills being considered  
7 in today's hearing and I just want to point out that  
8 our written testimony, which we have submitted, urges  
9 the City Council to consider several bill amendments,  
10 mostly pertaining to food and nutrition education.  
11 Ensuring that food nutrition education is included in  
12 any all New York City food policies that are meant to  
13 achieve food equity is critical to helping New  
14 Yorkers eat well throughout their lives in all the  
15 places where they live, work, learn, worship, and  
16 play. Thank you so much.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very  
18 much.

19 EDWINA LUKE: Good afternoon, Chairs  
20 Levin, Treyger, and members of the Committee of the  
21 General Welfare and the Committee on Higher  
22 Education. My name is Edwina Luke and I'm a student  
23 at the CUNY School of Public Health. I'm here to  
24 support the Resolution 1024. However, I wish to  
25 advocate for its modification to expand its

2 eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance  
3 Program to all low-income colleague students  
4 regardless of the colleague they are attending. I  
5 understand that immigrants and low-income students  
6 often attend public colleges. However, we have not  
7 forgot that, forget, that some of the students attend  
8 private colleges as well and they also face food  
9 insecurity. I graduated from Brooklyn College in  
10 2012. As a student there I experienced food  
11 insecurity. In 2016 I turned down an acceptance to  
12 the Global Public Health Program at NYU because I  
13 knew I could not afford tuition, housing expenses,  
14 and food. I knew I would not able to complete the  
15 program. Thank goodness for CUNY. I was able to  
16 complete my bachelor and now I'm pursuing a master in  
17 public health. I strongly believe that access to  
18 food should be given all income, low-income college  
19 students in New York City and thank you for giving me  
20 the opportunity to testify today.

21 NICK FREUDENBERG: My name is Nick  
22 Freudenberg. I teach public health at the CUNY  
23 School of Public Health and I'm the director of the  
24 CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute, and thank you for  
25 your testimony and let's talk. We can work together.

2 I also want to thank you all for your fortitude in  
3 today's hearing. My comments are based on the 2018  
4 report our institute produced analyzing ten years of  
5 food policy changes in New York City. Our report  
6 concluded that despite substantial progress key  
7 indicators of nutritional well-being and food equity  
8 have barely budged over the last decade and wide  
9 socioeconomic and racial ethnic gaps and diet-related  
10 diseases persist. As important as it is to get the  
11 details of the implementation of these 16 bills  
12 right, it is equally important to focus how they can  
13 be integrated so that we actually move the needle on  
14 food equity, and so my suggestions are going to focus  
15 on that integration, and I have five suggestions that  
16 as the City Council moves forward for you to  
17 consider. The first is a focus on coordinating  
18 implementation to ensure that the goals and  
19 strategies embodied in these 16 measures reinforce  
20 each other and don't compete for resources, and we  
21 think the food policy office will need more resources  
22 than they have. Second, to deepen food democracy, to  
23 find new ways to give more New Yorkers a voice in  
24 shaping their food choices and food environments so  
25 that we can make food democracy a reality. Ensuring

2 that those who will gain the most from transformation  
3 have allowed an equitable voice in food policy will  
4 help to achieve this goal. Third, mobilize broad and  
5 diverse coalitions. Making meaningful changes in  
6 food policy will require supporting and mobilizing  
7 the diverse constituencies that will benefit from a  
8 more equitable food system. Fourth, expand  
9 multilevel food policy and planning. New York City's  
10 food system stretches from the city throughout the  
11 tristate region and finding ways to work with the  
12 state government and other states to cut across those  
13 borders in procurement and other aspects of food  
14 policy will be really important. And finally link  
15 legislative and budget priorities. Achieving food  
16 equity in New York City will require reallocating the  
17 public and private resources that now maintain our  
18 inequitable food system. Each of these we have some  
19 specific suggestions. And the CUNY Urban Food Policy  
20 Institute looks forward to working with our  
21 colleagues here and the City Council to make sure  
22 that ten years from now food equity in New York City  
23 has been advanced. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very  
25 much, Professor. I've noted your previous testimony

2 in other hearings as well. Very, very informative  
3 and just a quick note as well, we learned that there  
4 is a gap in state law when it comes to education that  
5 we can't, the City of New York cannot even actually  
6 track nutrition education in our classrooms because  
7 the state law says they have to teach health, but  
8 they don't specify nutrition. And health is such a  
9 broad, vague topic. I take it that's why they wrote  
10 the law that way, to make it so purposely so vague  
11 that you cannot actually track that. So we're  
12 actually trying to push the state to make the  
13 language more clear for us to teach nutrition in our  
14 schools, to hold DOE accountable, and to invest in  
15 nutrition because the state also, they still owe us  
16 quite a bit of money, so in order to do the scratch  
17 cooking you need money to convert and retrofit these  
18 kitchens to actually, to get this done. And as we've  
19 heard enormous reasons to address to combat food  
20 insecurity, to make sure that we're providing our  
21 students, our families with healthy, nutritious  
22 meals. But as a former teacher myself I also, and  
23 someone who likes to cook when I have some time, ah,  
24 it's also a, it's one of the most powerful  
25 socialization experiences for our young people, for

2 our families, a time to just block out and just have  
3 a meal with their peers. That's important, to put  
4 the phones away, and to sit down and talk and share  
5 stories, and learn about and taste other folks'  
6 cultures and history. That, we lose that, and that's  
7 why I asked questions before about programming, time  
8 to even, for kids to even eat in school, where kids  
9 are denied an opportunity to even have lunch. I'm  
10 sure that's an issue in colleges as well, and food  
11 insecurity, there's no question about that. And so,  
12 Professor and all the panels, thank you for powerful,  
13 meaningful, and I love the suggestions of how to  
14 integrate all the data points that we'll collect from  
15 this bills to actually, to move the needle forward.  
16 So thank you very much, I truly appreciate it. Thank  
17 you all. And this I think is the final, or no, we  
18 have two more panels, oh, three, I'm sorry. Next  
19 panel, Deborah Soffel, Joshua Delgado, Messiah  
20 Timmons, Juan Pinza, and Melanie Button.

21 MELANIE BUTTON: Hi, my name is Melanie  
22 Button and I am the New York program director for  
23 Brighter Bites. I would like to thank you for  
24 welcoming us here today to testify in support of all  
25 of the bills. In particular, I am testifying in

2 support of Introduction 1666, which would create a  
3 permanent Office of Food Policy for the City of New  
4 York. Despite New York's status as one of the  
5 richest cities in the world, more than one million of  
6 our residents are considered to be food insecure and  
7 hundreds of thousands more live in food deserts or  
8 food swamps. I'm proud to testify before you in  
9 support of these bills aimed at addressing food  
10 inequity in New York City and be part of a historic  
11 initiative to ensure access to healthy food should  
12 not be determined by income. The organization I  
13 represent is Brighter Bites. We are a nonprofit with  
14 a mission of creating communities of health through  
15 fresh food. We run a research-based and  
16 collaborative school program and this year we will  
17 distribute one million pounds of free fresh fruits  
18 and vegetables together with our partners at City  
19 Harvest directly into the hands of children and  
20 families in New York City schools. We will teach  
21 them how to use it and will track their behavior  
22 change with an ultimate goal of changing behaviors  
23 long term among children and their families to  
24 prevent obesity and achieve long-term health. We are  
25 one of several community-based organizations in New

2 York City doing the critical work of transforming our  
3 city's food system and turning the council's vision  
4 of food justice into reality for thousands of New  
5 Yorkers. But without a unified, comprehensive plan  
6 for food governance gaps in the system will remain  
7 and the impact of initiatives like Brighter Bites  
8 will be confined by competition for limited  
9 resources. Brighter Bites believes that an expanded  
10 and empowered Office of Food Policy is the path  
11 forward towards setting a sustainable and strategic  
12 food policy plan for the city, that it can encompass  
13 all of the many wonderful nutrition education  
14 initiatives like ours, and I appreciate the time that  
15 you've given me today to testify on behalf of  
16 Introduction 1666. Thank you.

17 DEBORAH SOFFEL: Hi, thank you to the  
18 committee for allowing me to testify. My name is  
19 Deborah Soffel. I'm a chef, a New York City public  
20 school mother, and a New York City program director  
21 at Wellness in the Schools, the nonprofit  
22 organization that teaches kids healthy habits to live  
23 and learn better. We partner with public schools to  
24 provide nutrition and fitness education. We help  
25 provide scratch-cooked meals and active recess

2 periods. We are advocating for four policy changes  
3 which would ensure that the DOE moves away from  
4 serving children highly processed meals and instead  
5 prepares scratch-cooked meals, bringing them  
6 nutrition education and food education to every  
7 grade, beginning in pre-K, provide culinary gardens  
8 at every school, and increase the duration all  
9 children have to eat their lunches and play at recess  
10 for a full hour. I am here today representing our  
11 executive director, Nancy Easton, and my fellow  
12 Wellness in the School chefs, led by chef and  
13 restauranteur Bill Telapan in favor of all the bills  
14 presented today, but in particular we are talking  
15 about Introduction 1676. This bill is critical in  
16 prioritizing the health of our children. Nearly one-  
17 third of children and youth in the State of New York  
18 are obese or overweight. We know that heat-and-serve  
19 processed foods served at fast food restaurants and  
20 in our public schools are changing the way our  
21 children's palates are developing and their metabolic  
22 systems, fueling this obesity crisis. I have been  
23 working in New York City public school kitchens for  
24 ten years and I'm here to tell you that scratch  
25 cooking is possible. I work daily with school cooks

2 who have the interest and the drive. It will take  
3 training, equipment, access to local vendors. It  
4 will take educators to provide the learning tools  
5 that allow students to develop the skills they need  
6 to make healthy choices for themselves. But I know  
7 it can be done. I have witnessed parental support  
8 for scratch-cooked meals, for nutrition and food  
9 education, for school gardens, for daily physical  
10 exercise, and every parent wants their child to be  
11 happy. They want them to be healthy and they want  
12 them to have a brighter future. We need to show our  
13 school communities that we stand by whatever it takes  
14 to ensure fresh food access to every child. Let's  
15 feed all kids real food. It takes strategy and  
16 vision, and together we can make New York City  
17 schools a healthier place for students to learn and  
18 grow. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

19                   MESSIAH TIMMONS: My name is Messiah  
20 Timmons and my colleague, right here, Joshua Delgado.  
21 We are former DOE DeWitt Clinton high school  
22 students, farmers, and now we're fresh food box  
23 interns at Teens for Food Justice. Thank you to the  
24 members of the City Council Committees on Economic  
25 Development, Education, and General Welfare for

2 holding today's hearing to advance food equity in New  
3 York City. TFFJ works in schools and food desert  
4 communities like our former high school, DeWitt  
5 Clinton, to train students to build and maintain  
6 indoor hydroponic farms that can grow thousands of  
7 pounds of fresh produce per year. As TFFJ food box  
8 interns we work with current DeWitt Clinton students  
9 to run a fresh food box program in the lobby of our  
10 school. Our fresh food box, which costs just \$14 and  
11 customers can purchase using SNAP includes a big  
12 selection of produce grown in the DeWitt Clinton  
13 hydroponic farm and sourced from local farmers. We  
14 are also lead cooking demonstrations, offer healthy  
15 food testing, and share what TFFJ has taught us about  
16 improving nutrition and health with customers. This  
17 program is bringing both good quality and food and  
18 education to our community. Because of our work with  
19 TFFJ and the hydroponic farm, students at DeWitt  
20 Clinton campus have learned a lot about food  
21 insecurity and the importance of advocating for food  
22 equity for all New Yorkers. Today Joshua and I are  
23 here to support various food equity bills before your  
24 committees and to speak specifically to bills 1654,  
25 1663, and 1676.

2 JOSHUA DELGADO: The various farm to city  
3 website created by Speaker Johnson's office is a  
4 vulnerable resource for many programs being offered  
5 by community-based organizations around the city and  
6 connecting low-income individuals with sources of  
7 fresh local-grown healthy food. We believe in a  
8 public campaign to promote this resource, could help  
9 more New Yorkers in need of these [inaudible]  
10 programs. We support the passage of bill 1654 with  
11 the following amendments. Add full, add school  
12 gardens, urban farms, and community gardens in the  
13 definition of farm to city programs outlined in the  
14 bill. It is useful for community members to know  
15 about the existence and location of these programs.  
16 Every Thursday we distribute fresh nutrient food that  
17 was grown and harvest in our former high school by  
18 our peers as part of our fresh food box program by  
19 adding school farms like ours, but also urban farms  
20 and community gardens into the definition of farm to  
21 city programs we would be better able to get the word  
22 out about resources that are local and come from the  
23 community most affected by food insecurity. Create  
24 one centralized hub for farm to city programs to be  
25 promoted through public campaigns. Add language to

2 ensure the department talks with the community-based  
3 organizations include in the campaign around  
4 messaging to promote the campaigns and neighborhoods  
5 and community areas.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to applaud  
7 you. It is, both of you, all, but particularly young  
8 people did a fantastic job. It is not easy to come  
9 to City Hall. Cameras, the lights, politicians,  
10 advocates. You did a phenomenal job.

11 JOSHUA RODRIGUEZ: [laughs] Yes, thank  
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Your testimony is  
14 powerful and spot-on. Thank you for continuing the  
15 student perspective on this issue. I think, if I  
16 could kind of paraphrase some things I heard was that  
17 in so many communities that are already like healthy  
18 food deserts or we've heard other powerful language  
19 to describe the neighborhoods, I represent some of  
20 them, too, in southern Brooklyn. Our schools should  
21 serve as the great equalizers and not be reflections  
22 of things that are happening or not happening but  
23 equalize opportunity for our students and for our  
24 families, and that's just not the case, and the  
25 hydroponic investments make so much sense and so I

2 just applaud you, both of you, for your great  
3 powerful advocacy. I applaud our great chefs in the  
4 schools that if given the opportunity would love to  
5 prepare, and the training and the resources,  
6 equipment, and the access to prepare meals for the,  
7 that's life-changing, game-changing for our school  
8 communities, and so I think you're onto something  
9 very powerful. We have a lot more work to do. But I  
10 want to applaud you as well. Thank you for your  
11 great work. Thank you very much. Thank the panel.  
12 Yes, appreciate you. Thank you. Cool shirt, too.

13 MESSIAH TIMMONS: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Next panel.

15 Barbara Hughes, Lawrence Ben, Robin Vitale, Wendy,  
16 Caitlyn Andrews. Whenever folks are ready you may  
17 begin.

18 BARBARA HUGHES: My name is Barbara  
19 Hughes and I'm the executive director of City Beat  
20 Kitchens, a social purpose catering company run by  
21 the New York City Homeless Services nonprofit agency,  
22 Project Renewal. We offer the most comprehensive  
23 services to homeless New Yorkers, serving nearly  
24 15,000 each year, adults, children, seniors,  
25 veterans, LGBTQ, young adults. Project Renewal's

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3 hallmark work force development program is our  
4 culinary arts training program which receives  
5 critical funding from the City Council and we are  
6 really grateful for that. Since '95 the program has  
7 prepared unemployed, homeless, and at-risk New  
8 Yorkers for careers in restaurants, corporate dining,  
9 and institutional catering. We've placed more than  
10 1300 graduates in food service jobs and our 80% job  
11 placement rate is double the national average for  
12 similar programs. In 1997 we started City Beat  
13 Kitchens, which was created to get more jobs for our  
14 graduates, to feed more New Yorkers in need, and to  
15 generate revenue for Project Renewal's homeless  
16 services. In addition to catering events and  
17 meetings, City Beat Kitchens serves 2.6 million meals  
18 each year at shelters, supportive housing, and senior  
19 centers across the city. That makes Project Renewal  
20 the city's largest provider of meals to New Yorkers  
21 in need. At Project Renewal nutrition,  
22 sustainability, and reducing food waste are  
23 priorities. We have a greenhouse at our culinary  
24 program site where students harvest fresh vegetables  
25 and herbs for their cooking. Our new Bedford  
greenhouse supportive and affordable housing

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2 development in the Bronx will feature an aquaponics  
3 greenhouse where residents can raise nutritious  
4 vegetables and fish. We will also have on site  
5 nutrition classes. Today Project Renewal urges the  
6 city to create a permanent Office of Food Policy.  
7 Reducing waste and ensuring all New Yorkers have  
8 access to healthy food are big challenges and we need  
9 big plans to address them. That's why we need  
10 permanent food governance now. In addition, Project  
11 Renewal supports Council Member Rivera's bill focused  
12 on food waste. A special track of our culinary  
13 training program that serves youth at the door we  
14 partner with Trader Joe's, which sends us produce for  
15 our students to use in class and even take home to  
16 their families. In closing, I applaud your  
17 leadership on food policy, food governance, and  
18 ending hunger.

19 CAITLYN ANDREWS: My name is Caitlyn  
20 Andrews. I'm here on behalf of Live On New York.  
21 Live On New York is an umbrella organization that  
22 represents over 100 community-based organizations  
23 across the five boroughs that provide services to  
24 older New Yorkers, including senior centers and home-  
25 delivered meals programs. First and foremost, we

2 would like to thank Speaker Johnson and the entire  
3 City Council for prioritizing the nutritional needs  
4 of older New Yorkers and all New Yorkers in the food  
5 equity plan that has been prepared. Live On New York  
6 wholeheartedly supports the plan and we are here to  
7 provide testimony on three specific, on three  
8 specific bills, Intro 1659, Intro 1660, and Reso  
9 1025. Intro 1659, sponsored by Council Member Chin,  
10 seeks to address the SNAP disparities that exist  
11 among older adults and ones that could be only  
12 exacerbated by the broad-based categorical  
13 eligibility considerations that the federal  
14 government has currently proposed. We wholeheartedly  
15 support the effort to continue outreach to older New  
16 Yorkers and to determine where barriers exist and  
17 where they can be addressed. Intro 1660, again we  
18 really support and appreciate the intent of this  
19 bill. I would like to simply emphasize the fact that  
20 if passed we need to make sure that all senior  
21 centers are able to comply and able to switch to  
22 scratch cooking if they were not doing so already,  
23 and learn how to comply with new regulations in a way  
24 that's not overly burdensome. Currently it's very  
25 difficult to actually get a senior center menu

2 through and that meets the nutritional requirements,  
3 so we just want to make sure it happens in a way  
4 that's easy for our community-based organizations  
5 with little resources to comply with. Finally, I  
6 would like to share support for Reso 1025. This is  
7 an exciting proposal for this state to opt into the  
8 SNAP restaurant meals program to allow disabled,  
9 elderly, and homeless SNAP recipients to use their  
10 benefits on hot meals. We hear anecdotally how  
11 difficult it can be for an older adult to stand at  
12 the stove and prepare a hot meal for themselves, so  
13 to have an option to go and maybe take out food from  
14 a grocery store that is hot, like a rotisserie  
15 chicken or something of that nature is a really great  
16 option for those who may otherwise not have that  
17 option. So we appreciate the intent of this bill and  
18 the overall package of bills presented. Thank you.

19                   LAWRENCE BEN: Good afternoon. My name  
20 is Lawrence Ben. I'm the political coordinator with  
21 the Retail Wholesale Department Store Union, WDSU.  
22 We represent over 100,000 members nationally who work  
23 in retail food processing, other low-wage sectors,  
24 with thousands of workers in the food supply chain.  
25 We're also a member of the New York City GFPP

2 Coalition. I want to thank Council Member Cohen for  
3 introducing the GFPP legislation, the leadership of  
4 Speaker Johnson, as well as the committee chairs for  
5 this joint hearing. Procurement is decidedly not an  
6 appealing topic, yet it merits our close attention  
7 given that our agencies spend billions of dollars  
8 each year procuring goods and services. In the  
9 context of the lowest responsible bidder standards,  
10 the city should not support a race to the bottom  
11 among our suppliers. Instead, we should use our  
12 purchasing power to raise the floor for suppliers and  
13 one such area to begin this effort is in food  
14 procurement. The RWDSU represents thousands of  
15 members in the meat and poultry processing industries  
16 across the country. As you may know, these  
17 industries are fraught with labor abuses, work place  
18 injuries, abuses of immigrant workers, and union  
19 representation makes all the difference for workers  
20 in these industries. And this is the food that we  
21 serve to our school children, our homeless residents,  
22 and other vulnerable populations. Food procurement  
23 reform should be the foundation for how New York City  
24 leads with it [inaudible] and the GFPP programs moves  
25 us forward in the right direction. We encourage you

2 to pay particular close attention to transparency in  
3 food procurement. The public should be informed of  
4 detailed information on who we procure our food from.  
5 The facility addresses whether or not the workers are  
6 represented by a union, history of labor violations  
7 and workplace injuries, as well as information  
8 relevant to other key areas, like environmental  
9 sustainability. This information will allow  
10 procurement officers to make appropriate decisions on  
11 which bids present the best value to our city, but  
12 also allow communities and advocates to hold  
13 suppliers throughout the food supply chain  
14 accountable. Reforming food procurement is low-  
15 hanging fruit, so to speak, and we hope to see  
16 meaningful reform soon. Thanks for your time and  
17 consideration.

18                   WENDY OSHIELS: Mine name is Wendy  
19 Oshieis and I'm an advocate in the City of New York  
20 and co-founder of the Urban Justice Safety Net  
21 Activists. I support all of the bills.  
22 Additionally, I am in favor of the New York State  
23 resolutions 1024 and 1025, which will expand the SNAP  
24 audience to many that have suffered nutritional  
25 deficits for decades. Intro 1650, farmer's markets,

2 SNAP, Health Bucks, and pharmacy to farm  
3 prescriptions should be heavily promoted in  
4 advertising in subways, buses, flyers distributed at  
5 NYC HRA SNAP centers. Currently every five dollars  
6 of SNAP purchases at the farmer's market, there is a  
7 two-dollar Health Bucks coupon redeemed. I suggest  
8 the city should match the coupon in an amount of one-  
9 to-one investment in your fellow New Yorkers' better,  
10 better health. The pharmacy to farm prescription  
11 program is a lesser-known SNAP benefit, which  
12 provides \$30 of Health Bucks coupons to recipients  
13 that have health benefit plan. With more New Yorkers  
14 being able to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, and  
15 whole grains their general health will improve. Is  
16 there a way to automate the enrollment of eligible  
17 low-income seniors into the SNAP's benefit? Is there  
18 a way to automate the children's summer school meal  
19 program for eligible pupils? Providing school  
20 resources automatically to many low-income reduces  
21 the social stigma that some people have contemplating  
22 applying. Many proud people suffer with hunger  
23 behind closed doors. Intro 1652, community gardens  
24 should be protected as green space and agribusinesses  
25 which are owned by the neighborhoods. Neighbors

2 should purchase what is grown on site at a  
3 significant discount to encourage healthy eating.  
4 Urban farming is a way to nurture and train young  
5 gardeners in planning small business and providing  
6 fresh produce to their community. Intro 1664 and  
7 1666, the establishment of an Office for Food Policy  
8 and a 10-year plan to nourish low-income people in  
9 the city is much overdue. Resolution 1024 to assist  
10 public college school students to receive SNAP  
11 benefits while attending college is very necessary to  
12 support the young adults while they complete their  
13 degrees. The New York State Office of Temporary and  
14 Disability Assistance would be providing food  
15 security for our future leaders. Resolution 1025,  
16 Albany, with many constituents living in homeless  
17 shelters or on the streets for three, five, or seven  
18 years, the disabled often not able to cook, and the  
19 elderly usually living single, the SNAP restaurant  
20 meals programs would allow these populations to have  
21 access to hot meals. By spending their SNAP benefit  
22 on the local economy, grocery stores, delis, and  
23 restaurants will circulate. I thank you very much  
24 for considering my suggestions to improve the  
25 service, delivery, and customer service at the City

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2 of New York's Human Resource Center and job centers.

3 Thank you.

4 ROBIN VITALE: Good afternoon, Chair

5 Levin and Chair Treyger. My name is Robin Vitale and  
6 I serve as vice president of health strategies for  
7 the American Heart Association here in New York City.

8 The American Heart Association is also a member of  
9 the Healthy Retail Food Action Network and I would be  
10 remiss in this conversation if we didn't also  
11 emphasize the vital lifeline that healthy food  
12 retailer and retailers can provide in this equation.

13 I know the growing food equity report does reference  
14 fresh. But we would encourage the council to think  
15 not only how to improve that program but also expand  
16 beyond it as well. For the purpose of the American  
17 Heart Association we are here in support of the  
18 efforts to not only improve enrollments around SNAP  
19 but also expand those SNAP incentives known as Health  
20 Bucks. As was just stated, we want to make sure that  
21 New Yorkers do not feel any barriers to enroll in  
22 SNAP and that they are able to access those benefits  
23 as freely as they need to, and obviously the city  
24 Health Bucks program has significant evidence in its  
25 impact. We do want to make sure that that program is

2 expanded to be able to impact as many SNAP enrollees  
3 as possible, and echoing what was said before me the  
4 city investment in that program itself is somewhat  
5 limited. So there's significant opportunity for the  
6 council to really improve upon that during the  
7 upcoming budget discussion. Related to food  
8 governance, we echo what has been strongly emphasized  
9 throughout this hearing, that the Office of Food  
10 Policy has a significant opportunity to really reset  
11 and reboot the food system here in New York City by  
12 making sure that we are empowering them with the  
13 right type of authority, positioning them  
14 appropriately with the right resources and right  
15 staff, they can have a tremendous impact on this work  
16 moving forward so that we're not having this  
17 conversation again 10 years from now. And lastly, I  
18 think it's also equally imperative that we emphasize  
19 the community voice as part of that food plan. So it  
20 was referenced before having a broad group of  
21 community-focused partners that can help to provide  
22 insight and guidance to the Office of Food Policy,  
23 and the guise of a food policy council would also be  
24 a wise consideration for the council. So with that,  
25 thank you very much for your time.

2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I thank all of you  
3 very much as well and particularly focused on  
4 seniors, families here, there's no question, and just  
5 a quick note that when my district encountered a  
6 number of power outages the first thing that came to  
7 my mind in addition to getting the power back up was  
8 how are going to make sure folks have access to food.  
9 Whether it's a gas issue, in public housing in my  
10 district there's a gas outage almost every other  
11 week, sometimes for months. And we have to push them  
12 to get them the hot plates. But that's not  
13 sufficient. And then we need to get HRA to make sure  
14 people get food vouchers, those who are eligible, and  
15 so it is, we need a centralized person or office with  
16 resources to do this proactive outreach to make sure  
17 that everyone has, everyone's needs are being  
18 addressed. So I really thank all of you for calling  
19 attention to the various elements of this very  
20 serious issue. Thank you all very much, appreciate  
21 it. The final panel. Caroline Sheehan, Tamara  
22 McDonalds, Valentino, I think Valentina, yes,  
23 Christina Gonzalez, and Greg Waltman.

24 TAMARA MCDONALD: Good afternoon to the  
25 Committee of Economic Development, Council Levin,

2 Vallone, and Treyger, and the New York City Council  
3 and other stakeholders in the room. I am Tamara  
4 McDonald, a graduate student of CUNY School of Public  
5 Health, health policy and management focused. I am  
6 here to talk today about the Resolution 1024  
7 regarding CUNY students receiving SNAP benefits for  
8 coming up towards the bill. New York State Office of  
9 Temporary Disability Assistance is someone who's  
10 identified as a person to adapt this for SNAP  
11 benefits in the resolution and I am for this bill. I  
12 think it's a benefit to all CUNY students that are  
13 eligible for SNAP benefits to avoid the food  
14 insecurities. Currently according to the April 2011  
15 survey there were a significant amount of students,  
16 over 75%, who were identified as having low food  
17 insecurity or insufficient foods available to them.  
18 And of those students, some demographic backgrounds,  
19 42.3% of them were black, identified as black  
20 students, and 48% of them as Hispanic, and as known  
21 those people of color who experience those  
22 [inaudible] are also ones who are struggling  
23 financially or as myself being an old, the first  
24 generation to go to college and having to have  
25 concern about food should not be one of a CUNY

2 student whereas they're just trying to pass exams,  
3 and I believe that this should not be an issue for  
4 students but it is living in New York City, dealing  
5 with transportation and having to sometimes go to  
6 campus where they don't have access to fresh foods  
7 and I want to see them for this bill. Thank you.

8 GREG WALTMAN: Good afternoon, Council.  
9 Greg Waltman for a clean energy company called G1  
10 Quantum. I'm just going to briefly kind of surmise  
11 what I heard today. Chair Treyger, you said, you  
12 referenced the schools needing more funds and month  
13 after month I've been here advocating for  
14 contractual, you know, needs so we can get types of  
15 projects like the solar application of wall in place  
16 so then we can offset these fiscal budgetary  
17 concerns. You know, and you ask specifically can the  
18 school accept private funds, right? So if we can  
19 tether these contracts together, you know, then we  
20 can resolve this. But it seems that, you know, the  
21 Green New Deal value scams and these things that take  
22 up space and oxygen, you know, are really  
23 constricting and impairing the council from moving  
24 forward and resolving these issues, which I'm sure  
25 are extenuating pressures on the council outside of

2 this chamber, right? So if someone is coming to you  
3 with the solution to this issue and then repeatedly  
4 you keep asking well, what is the solution, what is  
5 the solution, and it's already been presented, it  
6 just, it just doesn't really make any sense and at  
7 what point does the city then sue the state to say,  
8 OK, well, in line with Councilman Constantinides  
9 where is the state, why is the state need or feel the  
10 need to present the public an illusion of choice on  
11 solutions to make it seem like we have fiscal and  
12 budgetary impasses, when in actuality, you know,  
13 these are viable solutions that have been presented  
14 forward. You know, I'm all for it. When I was at  
15 school, too, I liked an extra meal or two. I'm a  
16 pretty big guy, you know, like some of the people  
17 that testified, you know, you can't really, you know,  
18 have or compare someone in elementary school to  
19 middle school to high school and everyone's getting  
20 the same portion. If everyone, you know, got what  
21 they wanted, you know, I'm not saying throwing out  
22 robust amounts of food, but I'm saying that, you  
23 know, when, when we're all sitting here dedicating  
24 time to this and the solutions that are being  
25 presented day in and day out to the council aren't

2 being implemented and are being parsed out and  
3 censored by the value media and that type of  
4 establishment, um, it just becomes an issue where I  
5 would say more legal course of action for the council  
6 with respect to the illusion of choice the state  
7 wishes to present to the public in line with Chair  
8 Constantinides. So Chair Treyger, I really  
9 appreciate your time and, you know, the heartfelt  
10 testimony and, you know, your dedication to the issue  
11 and we look forward to continuing the conversation.  
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, I appreciate  
14 that. Just note very quickly and then move on. New  
15 York State was sued. New York State lost the  
16 lawsuit. New York State is actually guilty for not  
17 giving our public schools in New York City over 1.2  
18 billion dollars, and they're still not complying with  
19 a court verdict. That to me is criminal and we need  
20 to hold our state leaders accountable to make sure  
21 that every dime owed to our school system is  
22 returned, plus interest, so we can discuss scratch  
23 kitchens and great energy solutions and renewable  
24 energy, so I'm all, I hear you, and I appreciate your  
25 testimony. Next.

2                   CAROLINE SHEEHAN: Thank you, and good  
3 afternoon. My name is Caroline Sheehan. I am  
4 another student of public health at the CUNY School  
5 of Public Health and Health Policy. And I am  
6 testifying in support of Intro 1653 to measure the  
7 impact of community gardens. Currently the only data  
8 the city collects and releases to the public on  
9 gardens is one, the number of gardens, and two,  
10 whether or not they engage in food production. By  
11 passing this legislation the city can begin to better  
12 understand the depth of resources that community  
13 gardens provide to the public. Research shows that  
14 gardens provide benefits across no fewer than 11  
15 different domains. These include not just the  
16 benefits listed in the growing food equity report,  
17 but also crime prevention, leisure and recreation,  
18 community organizing around other issues, and more.  
19 We measure what matters. Do economic development,  
20 nutritious food, and engaged citizens matter to us?  
21 New York City has been a pioneer in so many other  
22 domains of social welfare and community engagement.  
23 We can now become pioneers in quantifying and  
24 evaluating the impact of community gardens and  
25 through that maximize their potential. By gathering

2 this data we can better understand and harness the  
3 power of urban agriculture for promoting healthy  
4 eating, fighting climate change, and boosting  
5 economic activity. I still have about 40 seconds  
6 left. I know that there were some concerns raised  
7 about the other side of Intro 1653, specifically with  
8 regards to selling food and impact of concession  
9 permits, etc., and so I would encourage the council  
10 to consider evaluating or amending the bill to  
11 specifically promote the side of it that highlights  
12 collecting data on community gardens and urban  
13 agriculture. So I express my support for this bill  
14 and thank you for considering my testimony and  
15 support.

16 VALENTINO GRASSI: Good afternoon,  
17 Council. Thank you for allowing us to speak. My  
18 name is Valentino Grassi. I'm a student at the CUNY  
19 School of Public Health and I live in Carol Gardens.  
20 I come here today to voice my support for Intro 1659.  
21 I know there are a lot of facts that are tossed  
22 around about this, but I want to make this a little  
23 more close to my heart. Every evening at around 6:30  
24 p.m. I convene in the back yard with my 88-year-old  
25 next-door-neighbor. I come over and I bring her food

2 and I hand it over the chain link fence, like she  
3 used to do for me every day when I was a kid, and  
4 usually she'll say something like thank you, this is  
5 the only thing I've had to eat all day. In my area,  
6 an ever-dwindling population of seniors live by  
7 themselves on a fixed income and have no one to take  
8 care of them. They need the support from SNAP. It's  
9 especially important we give voice to the voiceless  
10 and help this group now when they need it most. And  
11 that's all. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you for what  
13 you do. That is the essence of being a New Yorker.  
14 We're there for each other, but we have to be there  
15 for our families. So we have some homework to do  
16 here on this end. I truly appreciate you. Thank you  
17 very much and thank you for the entire, all the folks  
18 that stayed out. It's been quite the hearing, a very  
19 important hearing. More work to do, and make sure  
20 you have dinner tonight as well. With that, we will  
21 adjourn this hearing. [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date October 14, 2019