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Res. No. 57-A

Resolution calling on New York state to create a program to provide food benefits for those not eligible for existing benefits, including anyone over 55 meeting income eligibility.

By Council Members Ayala, Louis, Restler, Hanif, Hudson, Brewer, Farias, Gutierrez, Avilés, Schulman, Rivera, Banks and Joseph

Whereas, The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the Country's largest benefit program geared toward eliminating hunger; and

Whereas, According to the most recent data, there were more than 41 million people, and more than 21 million households, utilizing SNAP in fiscal year 2024; and

Whereas, This is well above the pre-pandemic figures of over 35 million people and nearly 18 million households in fiscal year 2019; and

Whereas, Despite increases to SNAP benefits, many Americans face food insecurity, meaning that they lack consistent access to enough food to support a healthy and active life; and

Whereas, Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 37.2 million United States residents, or 11.5 percent, were food insecure, according to Food Bank NYC; and

Whereas, Meanwhile, in New York state, nearly 2.2 million New York state residents, or 11.1 percent, were food insecure; and

Whereas, In New York City nearly 1.3 million New York City residents, or almost 15 percent, were food insecure; and

Whereas, New York City's food insecurity rate is 12 percent higher than the national rate, and 16 percent higher than the New York state rate; and

Whereas, New York City residents make up half (50 percent) of all food insecure people living in New York state; and

Whereas, According to City Harvest, the pandemic has exacerbated the hunger crisis and food insecurity in New York City has increased an additional 36 percent of pre-pandemic levels; and

Whereas, According to City Meals on Wheels, one in ten older (over 60 years old) New York City residents face hunger; and

Whereas, However, according to a December 2021 report from the United Hospital Fund, around 40 percent of food insecure New Yorkers have incomes too high to be eligible for SNAP; and

Whereas, Due to the SNAP program being funded by federal funds, undocumented immigrants are also excluded from the program; and

Whereas, To address this, California established its own, state-funding food assistance program called the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP); and

Whereas, This program offers broader eligibility standards for immigrants, and covers lawful permanent residents, refugees, and asylum seekers, even if they have not lived in the Country for at least five years, in comparison to SNAP which requires at least five years of legal status; and

Whereas, Although the broad eligibility does not cover undocumented individuals, California recently passed a budget initiative to cover undocumented residents of the state over the age of 55; and

Whereas, New York state has previously established funds to help provide benefits to those excluded from federal programs; and

Whereas, For example, in 2021, New York state established an Excluded Workers Fund, which provided benefits to New Yorkers who lost income during the COVID-19 pandemic and were left out of various federal relief programs, including unemployment and pandemic benefits; and

Whereas, New York state could establish a similar program to CFAP to cover New Yorkers ineligible for the federal SNAP program; and

Whereas, Research has shown that reducing food insecurity has a profound and positive impact on the health of recipients; and

Whereas, According to research from the United Hospital Fund, decreasing food insecurity by 20 percent would reduce the State's healthcare burden by $550 million; and

Whereas, The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated food insecurity and while programs like SNAP are useful in addressing the issue, too many New Yorkers fall outside of the eligibility requirements; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the city of New York calls on New York state to create a program to provide food benefits for those not eligible for existing benefits, including anyone over 55 meeting income eligibility.

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