



FOR THE RECORD

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September 6, 2017

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TESTIMONY OF THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

**In Support of a Resolution of the New York City Council
Opposing Federal Budget Cuts in the SNAP Program**

The Legal Aid Society strongly supports the passage of the resolution (T2017-6579) introduced by Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito to urge Congress to reject proposals to cut funding to SNAP and efforts to convert the program into a block grant. This is not the time to cut a program that has been proven to be effective in helping to address the food insecurity that now affects one in seven Americans.

Background

The Legal Aid Society, the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, is more than a law firm for low-income families and individuals who cannot afford to pay for counsel. It is an indispensable component of the legal, social and economic fabric of New York City – passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform. The Society has performed this role in City, State and federal courts since 1876. With its annual caseload of more than 300,000 legal matters, the Society takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States, and it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession. The Society's law reform representation for clients also benefits some two million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a national impact. The Legal Aid Society has nearly 2,000 employees with courthouse offices in locations throughout New York City. The Society's legal program operates three major practices — Civil, Criminal and Juvenile Rights — and receives volunteer help from law firms, corporate law departments and expert consultants that is coordinated by the Society's Pro Bono program.

The Society's Civil Practice provides comprehensive legal assistance in legal matters involving housing, foreclosure and homelessness; family law and domestic violence; income and economic security assistance (such as unemployment insurance benefits, federal disability benefits, food stamps, and public assistance); health law; immigration; HIV/AIDS and chronic diseases; elder law for senior citizens; low-wage worker problems; tax law for low-income workers; consumer law; education law; community development opportunities to help clients move out of poverty; and reentry and reintegration matters for clients returning to the community from correctional facilities. Typically, clients seek assistance from the Civil Practice after exhausting all other avenues for assistance. The Society's Civil Practice is the safety net when all other safety nets fail. In FY17, our Civil Practice worked on more than 48,500 individual cases and legal matters, benefiting nearly 126,000 low-income children and adults.

Through our Public Benefits practice, we represent a large number of clients who rely upon SNAP benefits to get through difficult times that are often caused by a change of circumstances, such as unemployment, disabling medical and mental health conditions, domestic violence, homelessness or even the need for child care. We also provide legal services to thousands of low-wage workers each year through our Employment Law Unit, working to ensure these workers receive fair wages, fair treatment, decent working conditions, and the benefits to which they are entitled if they lose their jobs. In FY17, our case handlers achieved favorable results in 86% of cases in which there was a court decision and 96% of cases in which there was an administrative agency decision. Even with our help, many hard working families do not earn enough to meet the high costs of housing and feed their families. Tens of thousands of such families need SNAP benefits to bridge the gap while they seek a path to a more stable income: by finding a decent job that pays a living wage, seeking education, training or employment to build the skills to get decent jobs.

The Society Strongly Supports the Resolution Opposing Cuts in the SNAP Program

The calls for so-called "reform" of the SNAP program are base and misguided at best. The administrative costs of the program are remarkably low, with fully 90 percent of SNAP expenditures going directly to low income Americans – including seniors, low-wage workers, the unemployed and those living with disabilities. They all turn to local supermarkets and bodegas to use SNAP to purchase food to feed their families. Although the SNAP benefits have not kept up with overall increases in food prices, they are often the difference between being able to eat and going hungry.

SNAP benefits are currently helping nearly 3 million New Yorkers, including nearly 1.7 million New York City residents. Who are the recipients who Congress and President Trump would be hurting if they go ahead with cuts in the SNAP program?

In New York State:

- More than 56% of SNAP participants are in families with children
- More than 44% are in families with members who are elderly or have disabilities
- Almost 42% are in working families.

The proposed SNAP cuts come at a time when income inequality persists at record levels. One in five New Yorkers – including our seniors -- are living below the federal poverty level, and in some neighborhoods the official poverty rate is at 50% according to the latest census data. Child poverty in New York City is at nearly 30%. As shocking as these numbers are, they do not capture the depth of poverty here since the federal standard does not reflect the higher costs of housing we face in New York City and elsewhere in the region.

Against this backdrop, SNAP has proven to be one of the most effective tools the federal government currently has to address poverty. In New York State, the SNAP program has helped keep over 700,000 struggling New Yorkers – including 300,000 children -- over the poverty line in recent years according to a study by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Cutting back on the SNAP program at a time such as this would seriously impair a program that has a demonstrable impact in fighting income inequality.

It is also worth noting that the SNAP program has a positive impact on the local economy. Virtually every dollar in SNAP benefits is spent at a local supermarket, bodega or even farmer's market. Independent economists at Moody's Investor Service estimate that for every dollar in SNAP benefits, 1.7 dollars are generated in local economic activity due to the multiplier effect as the workers at these establishments in turn spend their earnings locally, and food sector business establishment use revenues to maintain and build their businesses.

In New York, the revenue generated through the SNAP program is not insignificant: New York City residents receive – and spent in local stores – the equivalent of over \$240 million in benefits each month according to the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. Cuts in the SNAP program will, inevitably, mean the loss of jobs in the retail and food service sector.

There is no “budget crisis” upon us that mandates cuts in the SNAP program, it is simply one more expression of a drive to perversely transfer resources from those who need it most to those who simply want more. The newest proposed cuts, in SNAP, Medicaid and other areas that benefit low-income and working families, are being pushed by the same voices that are advocating lower taxes – and more income – for the most well off.

Cutting SNAP, under the guise of a so-called “block grant” or any other confabulation marketed in Orwellian terms as a “reform” will not make America great. It will instead stand out as a remarkably un-American assault on low-income families, seniors, the disabled, hard-working but poorly paid workers, and children.

The words of another president are worth recalling today: “The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have little.” (Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1937).

We applaud the Speaker for introducing this resolution, and urge its adoption by the Council.

Adriene Holder, Attorney-in-Charge
The Legal Aid Society, Civil Practice



**Testimony of Natosha McCray, Food Action Board Member,
Hunger Free America**

**Hearing Before The New York City Council Committee on
Committee on General Welfare**

September 6, 2017

My name is Natosha McCray, and I have been a member of the Bronx CSA since 2011. I have been a participant in Hunger Free America Food Action Board for the same time. I have been an advocate for Hunger Free America because this issue affects my family and friends. We are hardworking people who take care of our children and need the help to maintain the nutritious foods our family needs. As a person who works with children, I have seen what problems hunger brings to the classroom, taking away the SNAP program or cutting it will effect these children on a daily basis. I implore you to consider the ramification of a bill being passed where these necessary benefits are taken from the mouths of the nation's most vulnerable people, children, elderly, and the working poor. Please vote against any impending cuts to the SNAP Program.

I want to thank Chairman Levin and the rest of the Committee for your work fighting on behalf of the most vulnerable New Yorkers, as well as for the opportunity to testify. Hunger Free Americans strongly supports this resolution urging Congress to reject proposed reforms to cut funding to SNAP and to reject efforts to convert the program into a block grant. I would like to thank Speaker Mark-Viverito for introducing this crucial resolution.

In 2015, 42 million Americans lived in households classified by the federal government as “food insecure,” meaning they could not always afford the food they needed. Cuts in SNAP funding and converting program to block grant would take billions of dollars worth of groceries out of the shopping carts of tens of millions of struggling working parents, children, seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, and unemployed people by slashing SNAP (formerly called Food Stamp) benefits.¹

The stereotype that hungry people and SNAP recipients don’t want to work is false. 16 million Americans work but still struggle with hunger, and nearly half of all SNAP recipients are in families with at least one person currently working (in low-wage jobs), while most of the rest

¹ <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/Characteristics2014-Summary.pdf>

have an adult temporarily unemployed.² In fact, 90 percent of adult SNAP recipients with children are employed the year before *and* the year after obtaining these benefits.³

It is *not* welfare; it is work support and social insurance.

Even before these latest round of proposed cuts, billions of dollars had already been cut from SNAP over the last few years. It is no wonder that one in seven Americans – including 13 million children (one in six) lived in households that couldn't always afford enough food.

The proposed cuts could make it harder for people who need it to get SNAP, and would slash benefits to those already receiving them, even though they now equal only a paltry \$1.40/meal. On top of that, they are even contemplating plans to make it harder for low-income kids to get school meals, while increasing paperwork for schools.

SNAP is a vital program that helps guarantee access to nutritious food for millions of people. Not only does SNAP slash hunger and enable families to afford healthier foods, it lifts more than ten million Americans, including five million children, above the poverty line. At the same time it has the lowest fraud rate in program history: only about one percent.⁴ We need to continue funding these programs at current levels and resists any attempts to shift to block grants.

²https://www.hungerfreeamerica.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/National%20Working%20Hunger%20Release%20November%202016_0.pdf

³ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/the-relationship-between-snap-and-work-among-low-income-households>

⁴ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pressrelease/2013/fns-001213>

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FOR THE RECORD

TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

NYC Council, Committee on General Welfare

Honorable Stephen Levin, Chair, Committee on General Welfare

Submitted by:

Ariel Savransky, UJA-Federation of New York

Re: Resolution urging Congress to reject cuts to SNAP funding

September 6, 2017

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*Executive Committee member **Of Blessed Memory

Good morning Chairperson Levin and members of the Committee on General Welfare. My name is Ariel Savransky and I am an Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA-Federation of New York. Established 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. Central to our mission is to care for those in need. We identify and meet the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. We connect people to their communities and respond to crises in New York, Israel and around the world. We support nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services.

On behalf of UJA, our network of nonprofit partners and those we serve, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this resolution urging Congress to reject proposed reforms to cut funding to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and to reject efforts to convert the program into a block grant. UJA-Federation of New York stands with the New York City Council in urging Congress to reject these proposals.

Our nonprofit partners provide vital services and supports to New Yorkers all throughout the five boroughs. We are also the largest provider, through our core partners, of kosher food. There are over 500,000 people living in poor or near-poor Jewish households in New York City. The high cost of a kosher meal – which on average is 30 percent more expensive than a not-kosher meal – presents a unique challenge for many of our agencies in their work with clients who observe these dietary laws. SNAP recipients often exhaust their current SNAP allotments by the last week of the month, but for those observing kosher dietary laws, benefits may run out much earlier in the month.

Funding cuts to SNAP, as well as converting the program into a block grant, will further tax already limited resources and result in the inability of our agencies to respond to the increased nutritional needs of the individuals with which they work. Federal cuts to SNAP in 2013 decreased the amount of SNAP benefits that New Yorkers receive each month, resulting in increased reliance on the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) to get adequate nutrition throughout the month. Because of this increased reliance on EFAP, according to a report by the Food Bank for New York City, almost half of food pantries and soup kitchens reported running out of food in September of 2016.

In July, the House Budget Committee approved a budget resolution that requires the House Agriculture Committee to identify at least \$10 billion in cuts to nutrition and other entitlement programs over the next decade. The budget resolution also includes proposals to cut SNAP by more than 20%, or \$150 billion, in that same time frame. A reduction of this magnitude would necessitate ending food assistance for millions of low-income families, cutting benefits for millions of these households, or some combination of these two devastating choices. The cuts would end benefits for approximately 3 million low-income people, as well as reduce spending for SNAP by more than \$25 billion over 10 years.

The legislation would also convert SNAP into a block grant beginning in 2021 and would diminish funding sharply by almost 30%, or \$125 billion, between 2021 and 2026. States would be given the authority to decide which benefits to reduce or terminate. Given that SNAP benefits average only \$1.41 per person, per meal and are allocated primarily to poor children, working parents, seniors, and people with disabilities, there are no good choices for who should shoulder these cuts.

Further, these cuts would come *on top of* SNAP reductions implemented in recent years and those planned for the future. In 2016, many states, including New York, reinstated a three-month limit on SNAP benefits for unemployed adults who were neither disabled nor raising children

Though SNAP benefits are modest, the program is the nation's most effective tool against hunger and severe hardship, particularly during economic downturns and periods of high unemployment. During the recession of 2009, as millions of Americans lost their jobs, SNAP responded to the increase in need and helped to avert the harshest impacts of the recession while also providing an immediate boost to the economy. Additionally, U.S. Census Bureau data shows that SNAP lifted 4.6 people above the official poverty line in 2015.

Recent data shows SNAP is helping over 43 million low-income Americans, one in seven residents, afford a nutritionally adequate diet by providing them with benefits via a debit card that can only be used to purchase food. The 43 million Americans utilizing food stamps indicate the enormous need for food assistance in our nation and SNAP's critical role in addressing it. This number includes about 3 million individuals throughout New York State, of which 1.7 million are New York City residents.

Rates of poverty and food insecurity remain extremely high throughout the United States. About 43.1 million Americans, including over 14 million children, were considered to be living in poverty in 2015. Child poverty is estimated to cost the United States more than \$500 billion each year, as homeless and hungry kids are more prone to health problems, are less likely to succeed in school and work, and are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system. With regards to food insecurity, about 15.8 million American households, nearly 42 million people, lacked access to adequate food at some point in 2015 because they did not have enough money or other resources to meet their basic food needs, according to information recently released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

According to the Food Bank for New York City, one in four New York City children, an estimated 399,000, suffered from food insecurity in 2014. One in 10 New York City seniors, about 164,695, was food insecure in that same period. Statewide, over 2.5 million New York State residents, or 12.6 percent, are food insecure, and more than 1.3 million New York City residents or 14.9 percent are food insecure. Furthermore, New York City's food insecurity rate is 11 percent higher than the national rate, and 18 percent higher than the New York State rate.

The impact of the proposed cuts on low-income communities would be enormous, as would the increased demand on already-strained local services and charities — either squeezing support for other needy residents or leaving many people who are cut from SNAP without sufficient food.

UJA-Federation of New York deeply appreciates the New York City Council's commitment to protecting the most vulnerable individuals, both in New York and throughout the country. We look forward to continuing to work together to support these vital programs that assist our city's neediest individuals and ensure that the organizations providing these services have adequate resources. Please contact Ariel Savransky at savranskya@ujafedny.org if you have any questions. Thank you.

FOR THE RECORD



TESTIMONY of FPWA

Before the
New York City Council General Welfare Committee

Preconsidered Reso: Resolution urging Congress to reject proposed reforms to cut funding to SNAP and to reject efforts to convert the program into a block grant

By The Speaker (Council Member Mark-Viverito)

September 6, 2017

Prepared By:

Carlyn Cowen, Senior Policy Analyst

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My name is Carlyn Cowen and I am a Senior Policy Analyst at the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA). I would like to thank Chair Levin and the members of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to testify before you today and for your leadership on issues that deeply affect New Yorkers.

FPWA is an anti-poverty, policy and advocacy nonprofit with a membership network of nearly 200 human service and faith-based organizations. FPWA has been a prominent force in New York City's social services system for nearly 100 years, advocating for fair public policies, collaborating with partner agencies, and growing its community-based membership network to meet the needs of New Yorkers. Each year, through its network of member agencies, FPWA reaches close to 1.5 million New Yorkers of all ages, ethnicities, and denominations.

FPWA strives to build a city of equal opportunity that reduces poverty, promotes upward mobility, and creates shared prosperity for all New Yorkers. As part of our economic equity agenda, it is critical to ensure that all New Yorkers are able to meet basic needs such as housing, food, childcare, education, transportation and taxes. Policies that lift people out of poverty such as SNAP are key in ensuring that New Yorkers gain access to economic security and stability.

In the most recent U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (2015), the New York State poverty rate was 15.4%, with a 22.0% rate for children, and 11.2% rate for older adults. In New York City, the poverty rate was amplified, at 20.0% overall, with children experiencing a 29.6% poverty rate, and older adults experiencing a 18.1% poverty rate. This means that nearly one in every three children and one in every five adults live in poverty. Simultaneously, the U.S. Census Bureau released the Supplemental Poverty Measure, which demonstrates the importance of federal programs and anti-poverty policies. Without the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), there would be 4.6 million more people in poverty across the US, or a 2.2% higher poverty rate on average. In New York, without SNAP there would have been 714,000 more people in poverty across the state, including 321,000 children.

While the above measure, the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), is a standard measure of poverty, it has many well documented weaknesses, and is particularly insufficient in a high cost of living city like New York. On the other hand, the Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS), which is measured in 37 states, is a much more accurate representation of the income level needed to for economic stability. It is based on all major budget items faced by working families (housing, food, childcare, health care, transportation, taxes) and takes geographic location and cost of living into account. Using the SSS, there are 42% of New Yorkers that lack enough income to meet their basic needs, or over 3 million New Yorkers. This is nearly three times as many New Yorkers that are defined as "poor" by the FPL. Looking at the Self-Sufficiency Standard, of the New Yorkers that lack enough income to meet their basic needs, 66% of them do not have access to SNAP benefits. This calls for an increase in SNAP benefits and SNAP eligibility, rather than cuts to the program.

SNAP is a particularly important program for New York, where the cost of living is increasingly outpacing incomes. SNAP support assists nearly 3 million New Yorkers across the state, more than half of whom are families with children, and nearly half of who are families that have members that are older adults or disabled.

The 2018 Federal Budget proposal calls for nearly \$200 billion in cuts to SNAP over the next 10 years, or more than 25% of the program. The combination of block granting, shifting costs to states and allowing states to cut benefits all but ensures that the program will be severely cut. The impact of these cuts would

disproportionately impact the unemployed, low-income working families with children, women, older adults and people with disabilities. Beyond broad cuts, it would also impose a strict benefit cliff, restrict time-limit waivers for unemployed adults, and cut the minimum benefit available mostly to seniors and people with disabilities. The benefits cliff would occur by eliminating categorical eligibility, which provides eligibility for many families that are above the Federal Poverty Line, but are still significantly below the Self-Sufficiency Standard.

SNAP is a highly effective program that helps households meet their most basic food needs. It has long term positive effects for children, working adults, as well as older adults and people with disabilities. By cutting this program on the federal scale, we would be symbolically and financially abandoning our national commitment to ensure that all American have access to basic nutrition. We urge the New York City Council to take a strong stand against the proposed federal cuts to SNAP and assert that all New Yorkers should have access to basic nutrition.

Testimony prepared by Daniel Reyes

For the Committee on General Welfare Hearing

Peconsidered Resolution: Urging Congress to reject proposed reforms to cut funding to SNAP and to reject efforts to convert the program into a block grant

September 6, 2017

On behalf of New York Common Pantry

Hello, my name is Daniel Reyes, Deputy Executive Director at New York Common Pantry which has locations in East Harlem, Mott Haven, Longwood and Hunts Points, and where we serve New Yorkers from across the City.

Thank you to the City Council, especially Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and General Welfare Chair Steve Levin for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the thousands of families that NY Common Pantry serves across New York City. At NYCP our strategy is to alleviate food insecurity through access to healthy food; wellness/nutrition education; and the acquisition and management of resources. The third part, the acquisition of resources, like SNAP are vital to giving families the opportunity to reach a level of stasis and dignity where they are not in the position of having to decide whether dinner is served tonight or the rent gets paid.

We are grateful that the City Council continues to prioritize anti-hunger programs, including three years of increases to the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) as well as expansion of universal free school lunch in nearly all NYC public schools. At the NY Common Pantry last fiscal year we served over 6 million meals to thousands of households. **Approximately 90% of those households rely on both SNAP and food pantries to supply their families with meals.** NYCP continues to extend its reach across the city to ensure that no family or individual goes hungry, but we cannot do this alone. The most sustainable and strategic tool we have is SNAP. It is the first line of defense against food insecurity for 1.7 million people in New York City and it must be protected at all costs.

We must all work together to fight any and all proposed cuts to SNAP and ensure the program is protected so individuals struggling with food insecurity can continue to rely on it. In our 37 years of existence, NYCP and our families have weathered many economic and political storms, but \$193 billion in proposed budget cuts to SNAP over 10 years would be devastating all around: for the families and individuals who will lose some, if not all of this vital resource; for the emergency feeding network in the city that would greatly struggle to meet the demand as families lose resources; and for local economies that would lose a key part of the economic engine that fuels them.

This resolution needs to send a loud and clear message, leave SNAP alone! Once again, I want to thank the City Council for introducing this resolution. We look forward to working with you to protect SNAP and help New Yorkers.



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Testimony prepared by

Rachel Sabella

for the

New York City Council

Committee on General Welfare

on

Resolution 1636-2017 - Urging Congress to reject proposed reforms to cut funding to SNAP and to reject efforts to convert the program into a block grant

September 6, 2017

on behalf of

Food Bank For New York City

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon Chair Levin and members of the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare. My name is Rachel Sabella and I am the Director of Government Relations at Food Bank For New York City. Food Bank appreciates the opportunity to present testimony today to the City Council for this resolution urging Congress to reject proposed reforms to cut funding to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) and to reject efforts to convert the program into a block grant.

First, Food Bank For New York City thanks the City Council for your continued commitment to addressing the issue of hunger and ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to affordable, nutritious food. We are grateful for the City Council's longstanding leadership on this issue, and pleased to see continued progress on anti-hunger initiatives this past year. The Council's

instrumental role in securing three consecutive years of historic increases to emergency food funding, through both the City's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) and the Council's Food Pantries Initiative – including the creation of 25 new school pantries – has been especially appreciated, alongside other robust efforts to support food-insecure New Yorkers.

For more than 30 years, Food Bank For New York City has been the city's major hunger-relief organization, working to end food poverty throughout the five boroughs. Nearly one in five New York City residents relies on our programs and services. Through our network of 1,000 charities and schools citywide, Food Bank's food distribution provides approximately 63 million free meals for New Yorkers in need. Food Bank For New York City's income support services, including SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) enrollment and free tax assistance for the working poor, put more than \$150 million each year into the pockets of New Yorkers, helping them to afford food and achieve greater dignity and independence. In addition, Food Bank's nutrition education programs and services empower more than 45,000 children, teens and adults to sustain a healthy diet on a low budget. Working toward long-term solutions to food poverty, Food Bank develops policy and conducts research to inform community and government efforts.

My testimony today will focus on the importance of protecting and strengthening the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP (formerly known as food stamps). SNAP is a crucial entitlement program defending 41.5 million Americans against hunger. In its current form SNAP is able to respond to growths in population, dips in the economy, and other variables of need among our most vulnerable neighbors. As you will hear today, Food Bank For New York City along with anti-hunger advocates from across the nation, encourages our national law makers to defend SNAP against any budget cuts or structural changes. We urge Congress to protect and strengthen SNAP, and appreciate all efforts by the New York City Council

HUNGER IN NYC

Our city measures food insecurity – the lack of access to sufficient food for an active, healthy life – using the Meal Gap, which represents, in lost meals, the financial resources food-insecure households need – but lack – to maintain an adequate diet year-round.¹

New York City's meal gap (as of 2015, the most recent year for which data is available) is 225 million meals.² Disaggregated by borough, the Meal Gap for:

- the Bronx is 41.2 million;
- Brooklyn is 87.6 million;
- Manhattan is 40.6 million;
- Queens is 47.4 million; and
- Staten Island is 7.9 million.

When individuals or families struggle to afford food, a robust safety net of anti-hunger policies and programs provides a backstop against hunger for poor and vulnerable Americans.

¹ The meal gap was developed for [Feeding America](#) by food insecurity expert Dr. Craig Gundersen of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. When the City Council legislated that the Administration report food insecurity annually as part of its food metrics report, the Meal Gap was adopted by the City of New York as its official food insecurity metric.

² Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, A. Crumbaugh, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. Map the Meal Gap 2017: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level. Feeding America, 2017.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP is our nation's first line of defense against hunger. It is a means-tested program that provides households who meet the eligibility criteria a monthly food budget that enables them to purchase the food they need at a variety of retailers, from supermarkets to farmers markets. As of December 2016, approximately 1.7 million New York City residents receive SNAP, with household benefits averaging \$260 per month.³

Emergency Food

A network of close to 1,000 food pantries, soup kitchens and other community-based organizations provide food for free to those who need it. This charitable network serves nearly 1.4 million New York City residents; of them, approximately 77 percent are United States citizens.⁴

SNAP IS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST HUNGER

SNAP is our nation's first line of defense against hunger. A federal entitlement program, SNAP now provides food assistance to 41.5 million Americans.⁵ SNAP is effective and efficient, and it is countercyclical, meaning has the flexibility to grow to meet rising economic need.

Nearly 1.7 million New York City residents (almost one in five) currently rely on SNAP to keep food on the table,⁶ with a monthly household benefit that has been averaging approximately \$260 since the SNAP cuts of November 2013 – a reduction of approximately \$18 per month, or \$200 per year.⁷

Food Bank For New York City analysis finds that, to date, the cuts have cost New York City residents more than \$540 million in lost benefits that could have been used to purchase food for more than 161 million meals.⁸

The White House Fiscal Year 2018 budget proposal includes deep and significant cuts to resources for poor and vulnerable New Yorkers. With multiple assaults on the safety net, this proposal, if enacted, would only increase food insecurity. One of the most significant cuts targets SNAP - \$193 billion in cuts over 10 years.

SNAP was designed to respond to changes in need as an entitlement program. The number of people relying on SNAP rises during economic downturn and shrinks as the economy improves. The flexibility of SNAP along with its efficiency in providing benefits- 95% of the budget for SNAP goes directly into benefits as well as an error rate of less than 4%- has served low income Americans in need well over time.⁹

³ New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

⁴ *Hunger's New Normal: Redefining Emergency in Post-Recession New York City*. Food Bank For New York City. October 2013.

⁵ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) National Monthly Data, May 2017 (latest available month). United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Data accessed August, 2017.

⁶ New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) as of December 2016.

⁷ *Still Scaling the Hunger Cliff: Need at NYC Food Pantries & Soup Kitchens*. Food Bank For New York City. November 2016.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Millions of Meals Lost Under a SNAP Block Grant*. Feeding America. January 2017

Proposals to change SNAP to a block grant would give states a fixed amount of funding per year. Meaning New York State would be provided with funding that has been predetermined and would not be able to grow with need caused by changes in the economy at the local, state, or federal level. According to Feeding America, proposed block granting would result in more than 750 million meals lost per year in New York State alone.¹⁰ A change like block granting to the structure of SNAP would lead to the reduction or complete loss of benefits for millions of Americans during a time of sustained elevated need.

Past programs intended to support those living in poverty, like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), have been shifted from entitlement to block granting in recent years. When the Great Recession hit families across the United States, TANF dollars were stretched thin. Often times, TANF dollars are shifted from helping struggling families to filling the gaps in other budget shortfalls and state priorities.¹¹

We must protect and strengthen SNAP as an entitlement program that is timely, temporary, and, targeted to help the most vulnerable Americans.

- The proposed cuts to SNAP would increase demand on the charitable food system at a time when these organizations are already stretched to meet sustained high needs.¹²
- Though food banks like Food Bank For New York City make a difference, national programs like SNAP reach far more people. In fact, charitable food programs only provide 10% of the meals that SNAP does¹³
- In NYC, SNAP provides more meals to New Yorkers in need in ten weeks than our entire network of soup kitchens and food pantries in an entire year.
- Approximately 339,000 New York City children under the age of 18, or approximately 1 in 5 (19%) already rely on soup kitchens and food pantries.¹⁴

SUMMARY

Food Bank for New York City is grateful for the opportunity to speak in support of this resolution. Block granting and cuts to SNAP would have a devastating effect across the country and especially in New York City. We are grateful to the New York City Council for its continued commitment and efforts to supporting anti-hunger efforts. Thank you.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ *Lessons from TANF: Block-Granting a Safety-Net Program Has Significantly Reduced Its Effectiveness*. Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. February 2017

¹² Meeting NYC's Need: Food Bank network needs assessment (February 2017)

¹³ Source?

¹⁴ *Hunger's New Normal: Redefining Emergency in Post-Recession New York City*. Food Bank For New York City. October 2013.

**THE COUNCIL
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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

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Name: Danette Riene

Address: JTA Community Outreach Center

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

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Date: 09/06/2017

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Name: Barbara Hart

Address: _____

I represent: Hunger Free America

Address: 50 Broad St, New York, NY 10004

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Name: Terry Hubbard

Address: West Side Campaign Against

I represent: Hunger

Address: _____

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Name: Rashida Latif

Address: _____

I represent: West Side Campaign Against Hunger

Address: _____

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Name: Daniel Reyes

Address: 8 E. 109th St

I represent: New York Common Pantry

Address: _____

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Name: Rachel Sabella

Address: Food Bank For NYC

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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Date: 9/6/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jessica Hughes Andrade

Address: Met Council 120 Broadway NY NY 10037

I represent: Met Council

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 09/06/2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Natosha McCray

Address: _____

I represent: Hunger Free America

Address: 50 Broad St. New York, NY 10004

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