

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE  
JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES  
AND THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

----- X

November 25, 2013  
Start: 1:05 p.m.  
Recess: 3:19 p.m.

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

B E F O R E:  
ANNABEL PALMA  
MARIA DEL CARMEN ARROYO  
Chairpersons

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Inez E. Dickens  
Ruben Wills  
Margaret Chin  
Mathieu Eugene  
Deborah Rose  
Charles Barron  
Ydanis Rodriguez  
Brad Lander  
Stephen Levin  
Jimmy Van Bramer

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

Robert Doar  
Commissioner  
NYC Human Resources Administration

Cecile Noel  
Executive Deputy Commissioner  
Emergency Intervention Services  
NYC Human Resources Administration

Gary Jenkins  
Assistant Deputy Commissioner  
SNAP  
NYC Human Resources Administration

Beth Finkel  
State Director  
AARP New York

Joel Berg  
Executive Director  
NYC Coalition Against Hunger

Kate MacKenzie  
Director  
Policy and Governmental Relations  
City Harvest

Triada Stampas  
Senior Director  
Government Relations  
Food Bank for New York City

Stephanie Gendell  
Associate Executive Director  
Policy and Government Relations  
Citizens' Committee for  
Children of New York

Lori McNeil  
Director of Research and Policy  
NYC Urban Justice Center

Ellen Vollinger  
Legal Director  
Food Research and Action Center

Agnes Molnar  
Co-Director  
Community Food Advocates

Janet Poppendieck  
New York City Food Policy Center  
Hunter College

2 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: [gavel] Good  
3 afternoon, everyone. I'm Councilwoman Annabel  
4 Palma and I chair the General Welfare Committee of  
5 the City Council. We will be joined by the chair  
6 of the Health Committee, who is also a member of  
7 the General Welfare Committee, Council Member  
8 Arroyo, whose... the bill that we will be  
9 discussing today, 1194, for it falls under her  
10 committee. I want to thank the staff who helped  
11 prepare for today's hearing, Andrea Vazquez  
12 [phonetic], Elizabeth Hoffmann [phonetic], and  
13 Bohemi Sumpura [phonetic]. I'm also acting chair  
14 of the Women's Committee while my colleague,  
15 Council Member Julissa Ferreras, is still out on  
16 maternity leave.

17 The purpose of today's hearing is to  
18 examine the administration's efforts to provide  
19 access to food for vulnerable New Yorkers. Today  
20 over 1.8 million New York City residents are  
21 relying on benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition  
22 Assistance Program, or SNAP as we know it, and New  
23 York City food pantries and soup kitchens are  
24 struggling to meet the high demand for their  
25 services. Considering the high rate of

2 unemployment, the prevalence of low-wage jobs and  
3 the rising cost of food, it isn't surprising that  
4 so many New Yorkers are struggling to access food.  
5 Compounding the problem is the federal... oh,  
6 sorry, I'm going to... yeah, compounding the  
7 problem is the federal government's assault on  
8 SNAP. On November 1st, 2013, SNAP funding from the  
9 2009 Federal Stimulus Package prematurely expired.  
10 This means that New York City will lose out on 76  
11 million meals and in dollars and cents, a family of  
12 three is expected to lose \$20.00 to 25.00 a month  
13 in benefits, and I know that myself and my  
14 colleagues have already receiving a lot of calls  
15 from constituents who have seen a reduction to  
16 their monthly benefits. In addition to these cuts,  
17 negotiations on the Federal Farm Bill that are now  
18 underway include proposals to cut anywhere from \$4  
19 billion to \$39 billion from SNAP over the next 10  
20 years. Although the recession officially ended in  
21 2011, many low-income New York City residents have  
22 not seen economic improvements in their own lives.  
23 Cuts to SNAP benefits would only hinder the ability  
24 of these families to rise out of poverty. Now is  
25 not the time to draw back.

2 Today the committees will hear  
3 legislation that I have introduced, Intro 1194,  
4 which will require the city to measure and report  
5 on food security. Specifically this bill requires  
6 the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability  
7 to work with agencies such as HRA and DOHMH to  
8 develop indicators to track and access food  
9 security in the city and then issue its findings in  
10 the Annual Food System Metrics Report. Although  
11 the federal government measures food security on a  
12 national scale, the city tracks things such as SNAP  
13 and emergency food assistance usage. This bill  
14 would create a mechanism to comprehensively measure  
15 the number of households facing food insecurity in  
16 the city. By doing so, it is my hope that we will  
17 not only improve our understanding of food security  
18 issues, but also better target our limited  
19 resources.

20 I'd like to welcome HRA Commissioner  
21 Doar and his staff for being here today and for  
22 providing testimony, and I know that my colleagues  
23 will be coming in and out. There's a big education  
24 hearing across the street, so you'll see folks  
25 coming in and out of the hearing as we proceed. I

2 want to thank everyone who's here who has an  
3 interest on this issue and Commissioner, I welcome  
4 your testimony.

5 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Thank you and good  
6 afternoon, Chairwoman Palma and members of the  
7 General Welfare, Women's Issues and Health  
8 Committees. As you know, I am Robert Doar,  
9 Commissioner of the Human Resources Administration  
10 and joining me today are two key members of HRA's  
11 leadership team, Cecile Noel, Executive Deputy  
12 Commissioner of Emergency Intervention Services,  
13 which administers our Emergency Food Assistance  
14 Program or EFAP, and Gary Jenkins, Assistant Deputy  
15 Commissioner of our Supplemental Nutrition  
16 Assistance Program. I would like to begin by  
17 taking a moment to thank you, Chairwoman Palma, for  
18 your leadership in making the General Welfare  
19 Committee hearings over the years that I have been  
20 Commissioner a setting for respectful, open and  
21 honest dialogue.

22 Of the many programs at HRA, the  
23 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is one  
24 that has gone through significant changes. The  
25 frontline and administrative staff at HRA, along

1 with community partners, have made it possible to  
2 enroll and continue to serve more than 1.8 million  
3 recipients. Through their commitment and efforts,  
4 the Food Stamp Program caseload grew over the past  
5 decade by more than 100 percent, serving more  
6 working New Yorkers than ever before. Last year,  
7 it accounted for over \$3.5 billion in benefits to  
8 residents in New York City. In addition, at this  
9 time a year ago, as we were all responding to the  
10 aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, over \$72.5 million  
11 in automatic and manual replacement and disaster  
12 benefits was distributed to those impacted by the  
13 storm. HRA's Emergency Food Assistance Program or  
14 EFAP administers \$8.2 million, the results of the  
15 distribution of 11.5 million pounds of food to 492  
16 food pantries and community kitchens across the  
17 city. In addition, the City Council appropriated  
18 \$1.3 million in funds this year to be used for a  
19 special initiative that includes the purchase of  
20 frozen foods for food pantries and community  
21 kitchens. Following Superstorm Sandy, FEMA granted  
22 EFAP another \$1.2 million to be utilized for the  
23 procurement of additional food to be distributed in  
24 the storm's affected areas. This replenished the  
25



2 inventory of food that was distributed as part of  
3 our Sandy efforts. Within the first three weeks of  
4 the storm, EFAP distributed more than a half a  
5 million pounds of food to the affected areas of New  
6 York City. Emergency food programs that were  
7 recipients of these deliveries reported serving  
8 more than 700,000 persons from October 2012 to  
9 September 2013.

10 EFAP has also made significant inroads  
11 in improving the nutritional standards of all foods  
12 that are provided to their emergency food network.  
13 Since 2008, consistent with city guidelines, EFAP  
14 has ensured that all foods purchased with city  
15 funding meet sodium, sugar and trans fat standards  
16 that aim to reduce the prevalence of obesity,  
17 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. In addition,  
18 now all emergency food programs funded by EFAP  
19 receive Food Stamp nutrition education services as  
20 well.

21 As I'm sure you aware, the Supplemental  
22 Nutrition Assistance Program is a federal program  
23 and as such, subject to the laws and regulations of  
24 Congress and the administration. As part of the  
25 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act or ARRA in

2 2009, Congress increased the maximum monthly  
3 benefit by 13.6 percent. Then in 2010, as part of  
4 the Child Nutrition Reauthorization, a bipartisan  
5 supportive provision accepted by the administration  
6 was included, which reduced the Food Stamp benefit  
7 in 2013 by \$2.5 billion nationally in order to pay  
8 for school nutrition. This reduction of  
9 approximately \$10.00 per household member just went  
10 into effect on November 1st of this year. We can  
11 also expect that Congress will make changes to the  
12 program as part of the present Farm Bill  
13 negotiations. These changes could include a pull  
14 back to some of the administrative changes of  
15 recent years that allowed for more people to  
16 qualify for the program or receive a higher  
17 benefit, an increased emphasis on employment and  
18 fraud prevention and a broadened use of electronic  
19 benefit transactions to purchase food delivered  
20 directly to the home.

21 HRA participates with the federal and  
22 state governments to educate the general public  
23 about the Food Stamp Program's eligibility  
24 guidelines and assets and assists with the  
25 application process through our office of outreach

2 services. In Fiscal Year 2013, outreach services  
3 were provided at more than 980 individual events  
4 and we increased our services to immigrants and  
5 non-English speaking New Yorkers by partnering with  
6 48 community-based organizations that primarily  
7 serve these groups. Outreach staff are on site  
8 regularly at three community sites and monitor the  
9 activity at 76 community-based organizations that  
10 provide facilitated enrollment; 51, which also  
11 provide recertification services. They also  
12 prescreened more than 8,700 applicants. This past  
13 year, we have also implemented a health campaign to  
14 educate New Yorkers about utilizing Food Stamp  
15 benefits to choose and prepare healthy foods.

16 Many of the changes to the Food Stamp  
17 Program that have come about have been about making  
18 the application process easier and more convenient  
19 for recipients. When I first came to testify at  
20 this hearing seven years ago, we had just recently  
21 created a unified management structure to manage  
22 the Food Stamp Only offices and were in the process  
23 of implementing the paperless office process in all  
24 of our centers. At that time, an initial pilot to  
25 include community-based organizations in the

2 program structure was just underway and showing  
3 good, early results. We were also getting ready to  
4 implement a pilot that would allow individuals to  
5 submit their application and supporting documents  
6 through the mail or by fax and interview over the  
7 phone. Similarly, we had just begun rolling out at  
8 two centers the ability for recipients to recertify  
9 over the telephone instead of us having the  
10 traditional office-based interview. Now most  
11 applicants cannot only file an application by mail  
12 and fax, but also online at accessnyc, and they can  
13 have their interviews done by telephone instead of  
14 coming to an office. This function, our Telephone  
15 Interview Processing Services or TIPS was recently  
16 reviewed by the staff in the United States  
17 Department of Agriculture, who were impressed by  
18 the customer service provided, and saw it as a  
19 model for other states. The council had strongly  
20 encouraged the use of web-based applications and  
21 now more than 45 percent of all applications are  
22 submitted online. Some recipients can also  
23 recertify using an automated telephone system at  
24 any time of the day or night, and all can request  
25

2 budget letters over the phone instead of coming  
3 into the office.

4 Building off of all these past  
5 improvements, we are now moving even closer to a  
6 self-service delivery model that is easier, faster,  
7 simpler and further protected from abuse. Our  
8 ultimate goal is almost all applications to be  
9 submitted online at home or at a community-based  
10 organization or anywhere that an applicant can  
11 access the web, while providing the ability for  
12 recipients to access and manage their own cases  
13 through secure online tools. After much planning  
14 across our agency involving the streamlining of  
15 business processes, engagement of staff to make the  
16 working environment better, talking and visiting  
17 with other states that have done similar work,  
18 piloting and testing the major concepts, physical  
19 alterations to some of our centers and securing a  
20 contract for needed technology upgrades, we are now  
21 well underway. Since March of this year, we have  
22 opened eight self-service centers in Supplement  
23 Nutrition Assistance Program offices throughout the  
24 five boroughs that feature computer banks and  
25 available staff to assist individuals if needed

2 with filing online applications. Once the  
3 application is completed, the applicant receives an  
4 appointment for a telephone or in person interview.  
5 We have plans to open two more additional sites by  
6 the end of the year and these self-service centers  
7 are introducing more of our clients to how  
8 technology can simplify and speed their  
9 interactions with our agency. Now and over the  
10 course of the next few years, we are building  
11 virtual client service center into the accessnyc  
12 portal to allow clients to go online and perform  
13 self-service transactions beyond applying for  
14 benefits. Through secure client accounts,  
15 recipients will be able to upload and receive an  
16 electronic receipt for their documents, recertify,  
17 make requests to change basic case information,  
18 check the status of their case and view their  
19 benefit amount and the next plan benefit payment.  
20 Throughout this restructuring, we will continue to  
21 work with community-based and city agency partners  
22 to ensure that New York's most vulnerable  
23 population such as the elderly, disabled and those  
24 with limited English proficiency have assistance  
25 with the application and other processes if they

1 need it. Toward this goal, we have naturally  
2 enlisted the support of our community-based  
3 partners, and just last week, met with a large  
4 group to encourage their participation in this  
5 effort. This new model will transform how  
6 applicants and recipients interact with our agency  
7 and as such, will also change the role and present  
8 duties of HRA staff. With a successful  
9 implementation, we envision an ultimate reduction  
10 by Fiscal Year 2017 of more than 1,000 employees  
11 agency-wide as the need for coming to centers is  
12 further reduced. Some staff will be reassigned to  
13 the Telephone Interview Services locations and  
14 elsewhere in HRA and we plan to rely on attrition  
15 in order to avoid the need for layoffs, and have  
16 already begun the process of leaving new vacancies  
17 open whenever possible.

19                   With the present increased  
20 participation in the program and our focus on  
21 automation, there are also additional program  
22 integrity challenges. We want those who need the  
23 benefits to have access, but also for applicants to  
24 know that they must provide accurate information  
25 about themselves. We have significantly enhanced

1  
2 our efforts to fight fraud and abuse in ongoing  
3 Food Stamp cases, but preventing it is even more  
4 cost effective than detecting it after it occurs.  
5 We now have a frontend review team that uses data  
6 analytics to flag applications identified as having  
7 certain fraud risk factors so that they can be  
8 further reviewed. Also, in moving to an online  
9 environment and self-service model, we are focusing  
10 on smarter ways to prevent application errors,  
11 duplicate cases and ineligible applicants. We plan  
12 to implement safeguards common to industries like  
13 banking and credit card companies that use  
14 questions to verify that the person on the other  
15 end of the internet connection is who they say they  
16 are and not someone who has stolen another person's  
17 identity or lives several states away. We also  
18 have a team dedicated to finding and investigating  
19 retailers and recipients who traffic in benefits,  
20 usually small, independent retailers. This  
21 enhances our efforts to investigate current Food  
22 Stamp cases arising from data matches, data mining  
23 and referrals from the public.

24 As you can see, overall we are working  
25 very hard to protect government resources while



2 further streamlining the process for applicants and  
3 recipients. I believe this combination has been  
4 key to our success and will be even more critical  
5 with every step further into reengineering our  
6 application process.

7           Before ending, I would like to briefly  
8 address the council's proposal for administration  
9 to fund a new annual survey on food and security at  
10 the community district level. Currently, as you  
11 know, the USDA reports on food and security at the  
12 national level. The measure is based on annual  
13 supplement to the current population survey, which  
14 is administered by the United States Census Bureau.  
15 The survey includes a series of 10 questions for  
16 households without children and 18 questions for  
17 households with children about whether they have  
18 enough money for adequate food. American  
19 households are determined to be food insecure if  
20 they respond positively to any combination of three  
21 or more of the statements on food insecurity. The  
22 10 statements on the survey range from the least  
23 severe, such as, "We worried that our food would  
24 run out before we got money to buy more," or "The  
25 food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have

1 money to get more," and, "We couldn't afford to eat  
2 balanced meals," to more severe conditions such as,  
3 "We skipped meals because there wasn't enough money  
4 for food," or quote, "We ate less than we felt we  
5 should because there wasn't enough money for food,"  
6 end quote. The additional questions for households  
7 with children refer specifically to the children in  
8 the household. The sample size for the survey is  
9 large enough to be representative at the national  
10 level, but too small for one year estimates at the  
11 city level. I also want to be clear about what the  
12 food insecurity measure is not. The USDA provides  
13 very clear guidance that the food insecurity  
14 measure is a household measure and not that of  
15 individual hunger. It, therefore, does not do a  
16 good job assessing the adequacy of our Emergency  
17 Food Program, for example, because it measures  
18 whether the household has enough economic resources  
19 for food, not whether individuals in the household  
20 are hungry. Although there may not be one measure  
21 that presently drills down to the question of food  
22 insecurity in the neighborhoods across the city, by  
23 examining the present measures on both food  
24 insecurity and present poverty measures, we have  
25

2 the ability to make informed policy decisions for  
3 our city. One potential consideration is the  
4 survey of the scope needed for this proposal could  
5 cost as much as \$1 million depending on how it is  
6 executed. All of these issues must be taken into  
7 consideration as the city contemplates a new local  
8 measure. At this time, I look forward to the  
9 Council's questions. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Thank you,  
11 Commissioner, for your testimony. We've been  
12 joined by Council Member Inez Dickens from  
13 Manhattan, Council Member Ruben Wills from Queens,  
14 Council Member Margaret Chin, Council Member  
15 Arroyo, as I stated before was going to be joining  
16 us, and Council Member Mathieu Eugene from  
17 Brooklyn, and I know there's a lot of hearings  
18 going on because this is a short week, so folks  
19 will be in and out of the committee hearing. Do  
20 you have any questions before you leave?

21 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: Just to say thank  
22 you for allowing us to tag along on this  
23 conversation. There's a sanitation hearing across  
24 the street that I also need to be at, so I at some  
25 point will excuse myself. I don't know if you

2 acknowledged the members from the Health Committee,  
3 Council Member Eugene, Council Member Dickens and I  
4 believe that's it, and myself. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Alright,  
6 Commissioner, I know that HRA at the city level  
7 cannot be fully responsible for... financially  
8 responsible for any of the cuts that you know, are  
9 happening at the federal level, but I want to get a  
10 better understanding of what HRA's plan is to help  
11 or to address the strain that these cuts are going  
12 to be having on individual households here in the  
13 city.

14 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, first of all,  
15 before I answer that question, I just want to say  
16 to Council Member Arroyo, I don't know if you  
17 missed it, but I wanted to thank you for your  
18 leadership of the committees that I've testified  
19 before over the years and I just... you've always  
20 been respectful to our agency and I greatly  
21 appreciate is.

22 CHAIRPERSON ARROYO: I hope that's not  
23 a goodbye. [laughter]

24 COMMISSIONER DOAR: That's very nice of  
25 you to say. [laughter] But anyway, the... well,

2 first of all, we had a lot of dialogue with the  
3 State of New York on communication because we felt  
4 it was important that they get notices out alerting  
5 recipients that there would be a change in their  
6 allotment you know, in November without really any  
7 change on their behavior or change on their  
8 particular application. And I want to say I think  
9 that that didn't go quite as well as we would've  
10 liked. The notices went out later than we wanted  
11 and we've had to direct our staffs, Gary and his  
12 team, to be prepared for questions in the centers  
13 and there have been some, and so that it wasn't I  
14 think as clearly describe. There was public  
15 dialogue about it, which was good, but I think as  
16 we go forward in the future when these sorts of  
17 changes occur and if they are to occur again, I  
18 think as a state and city and federal government we  
19 need to do a better job communicating them because  
20 our programs are complicated enough and the notices  
21 are complicated. I think we need to be a little  
22 clearer about communicating. But notices did get  
23 out and they were... told people and we haven't as  
24 much of a response in our centers as you might  
25 expect. It is a relatively small cut, but still

2 significant to some families. As I said, it's  
3 three and a half billion dollars a year now in New  
4 York City and this is something in the range of I  
5 think \$100 million or... Pat, do you know the  
6 number? I think it's about... it's not as  
7 significant, but so that's where we are. You know,  
8 people can get emergency benefits; they can come in  
9 and say they have a problem. We have issued... the  
10 program is open and available; that's where we are.  
11 Gary, did you want to add anything to that?

12 ASSISTANT DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JENKINS:

13 No, well, I would... hi, good afternoon.

14 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Hi.

15 ASSISTANT DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JENKINS:

16 I'm Gary Jenkins, Assistant Deputy Commissioner,  
17 HRA, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. We  
18 did also have a notice on our website in the event  
19 that recipients were confused. There was a message  
20 on our website, which pointed them to the state.

21 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Okay.

22 COMMISSIONER DOAR: And the other thing

23 I would point out is that we also have the  
24 Emergency Food Assistance Program, which is  
25 always... it has resources through kitchens and

2 food pantries and I don't think we've seen an  
3 uptick just yet this month, but those programs are  
4 also available.

5 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Well, do... and  
6 that was going to be one of my... my next questions  
7 was what do you anticipate to see in the following  
8 months in terms of this reduction and how the EFAP  
9 is affected?

10 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Go ahead.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: Good  
12 afternoon. My name is Cecile Noel and I'm the  
13 Executive Deputy Commissioner for Emergency and  
14 Intervention Services, and in terms of EFAP, we  
15 will continue to monitor this. We will look at our  
16 programs. We stand ready to assist our programs in  
17 any way if they need additional allocations or  
18 dollars, so but we need to monitor that. The cut  
19 just went into effect, so we'll look at that as we  
20 go on.

21 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: So how... we  
22 wouldn't have an idea or sense of how many people  
23 are being affected by this reduction, a breakdown  
24 in boroughs or...

2 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, every  
3 recipient of SNAP benefits is affected. There's  
4 a...

5 [crosstalk]

6 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Mm-hm.

7 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Cut, but the size  
8 is somewhere you know, an average nationally  
9 they're saying \$10.00. It depends on the family  
10 size and your budget, but it's a small reduction,  
11 but in these programs even a small amount is  
12 significant.

13 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Well, in monitoring  
14 are we going to track what that impact will  
15 actually be?

16 COMMISSIONER DOAR: We can total up the  
17 amount across the caseload. We can show you what  
18 it was for any particular case to the extent that  
19 someone's resources get worse off and their income  
20 is worse off and they want to come in and talk  
21 about emergency need, there is... that  
22 opportunity's available, but you know, we monitor  
23 it just as we monitor anything else, and we also  
24 have the Emergency Food Assistance Program. I also  
25 should point out that in the Mayor's budget



1  
2 amendment that he announced yesterday, he did add  
3 an additional to the baseline budget \$1 million in  
4 EFAP dollars.

5 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Okay and  
6 Commissioner, in your testimony, and I want to...  
7 you know, I want to recognize that there were a  
8 couple of things in the November plan that were  
9 baselined that I know a lot of... us and the  
10 advocates were calling for for many, many years and  
11 you know, I think that this is an... you know, we  
12 wanted to see this done earlier, but nonetheless  
13 we're glad that it happened now. We just have to  
14 make sure that... in making sure that we continue  
15 to work with the new administration to recognize  
16 that these are important areas of the city's budget  
17 that need to be protected. In your testimony, you  
18 mentioned there were 8,700 new applicants this past  
19 year that were prescreened. Do we know out of  
20 those 8,700 applicants like with their application  
21 how many of them are actually now receiving  
22 benefits versus how many applicants had... didn't  
23 get to go through the whole process or are still  
24 going through the application process?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: I'd just  
3 like to point out that that number referenced there  
4 is really just from the outreach staff that go out  
5 into the community, so it's by no means the total  
6 of those who applied to the centers and in other  
7 places.

8 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Okay.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: It's simply  
10 a subset of the community outreach component that  
11 we do, and today I don't have that number here with  
12 me, but it's certainly something I could get back  
13 to you on of how many of those actually got on.

14 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: And has this number  
15 with the... the work that has been doing... that  
16 has been going on with the community outreach, how  
17 has this number increased or...

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: The number  
19 has been increasing over time, but that's also a  
20 function of how many activities we do over the  
21 year. So if we do less activities, there are less  
22 applications and it's not every single outreach  
23 venue that we get applications from, so I think  
24 that has to be balanced against how many we do in  
25 the course of in a year.

2 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Are the activities  
3 solely from HRA's...

4 [crosstalk]

5 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, that's what I  
6 was going...

7 [crosstalk]

8 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Proactiveness or...

9 [crosstalk]

10 COMMISSIONER DOAR: To point out. We  
11 have... we like to think that the outreach for the  
12 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is not  
13 just in our house; it's a communitywide endeavor.  
14 It's in council offices and others. So what Cecile  
15 is talking about is what our staff or our  
16 supplemented staff have gone out to various groups  
17 who are maybe not as prepared to talk on their own  
18 about how the program works or how to use the  
19 internet and so it's good that we have that because  
20 that's our own troops on the ground.

21 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Mm-hm.

22 COMMISSIONER DOAR: But there's much  
23 bigger I think, as everyone knows, many people in  
24 this room are involved in outreach efforts in this  
25 program and I think that is even more important.

2 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Mm-hm.

3 COMMISSIONER DOAR: I love our staff  
4 and I love what we do, but we cannot do all that  
5 needs to be done...

6 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: [interposing]  
7 Right.

8 COMMISSIONER DOAR: All by ourselves.

9 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Okay, I have more  
10 questions, but I know that my colleague will run to  
11 other you know, hearings, so Council Member Wills?  
12 And we've been joined by Council Member Rose from  
13 Staten Island.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Good afternoon.  
15 Commissioner, thank you for coming down and I  
16 wanted to publicly once again acknowledge you and  
17 thank you for always being responsive. You and Mr.  
18 Jenkins have taken care of a lot of cases in my  
19 office immediately and a lot of these cases were  
20 cases that if these people didn't receive their  
21 benefits it would've really caused a problem. A  
22 lot of them had children; a lot of them were just  
23 mistakes that were made and you guys corrected them  
24 immediately and I want to thank you for that  
25 publicly. Now, except for the one sticking point

2 that we have with... I still have a couple of  
3 constituents that were not involved in fraud or the  
4 detection of fraud, but actually were errors  
5 [background voice] in part done by your agency and  
6 now they're going through garnishment of their  
7 wages because of benefits that were provided to  
8 them, so I'm going to keep calling you until the  
9 last day of this year to see if we can move that in  
10 some type of way. But my questions were in your  
11 testimony you spoke about the reduction in staff  
12 of...

13 [crosstalk]

14 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Up to 1,000  
16 employees that you envision happening by the year  
17 2017 and this reduction would come about because of  
18 the implementation of the TIPS and other technology  
19 that you are providing and that you're hoping that  
20 this is done through attrition. Do you actually...  
21 have you guys looked at the numbers in your agency  
22 to see if all 1,000 of these employees would be  
23 done or lost through attrition and is there any  
24 possibility of layoffs between now and 2017?

2 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, I can't  
3 project all the way to 2017. I can just say that  
4 it is unquestionably an outcome of what we're  
5 doing...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: [interposing]  
7 Mm-hm.

8 COMMISSIONER DOAR: That we'll be able  
9 to assist more potential recipients and recipients  
10 and recertification candidates in the Food Stamp  
11 Program with fewer staff. That's just... we're  
12 getting better. We're getting faster at it. We're  
13 getting... we're able to do it more successfully  
14 and we are a 14,000 person agency and we have  
15 looked at what we think these changes could result  
16 in and if done... if we do all the things we say  
17 we're going to do with regard to increasing the  
18 productivity of our workers, we should be able to  
19 lower our head count at HRA significantly. In  
20 seven years at HRA so far, and there's still time  
21 left, so I want to be honest about that and things  
22 are tough in administrative funding, we have not  
23 had layoffs since I've been at HRA. But sometimes  
24 if you have staff, but don't have adequate funding  
25 sources or appropriate funding sources...

2 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: [interposing] Mm-  
3 hm.

4 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Layoffs have to  
5 occur, but I can't... we do not have any planned  
6 layoffs or expected layoffs or... and we don't want  
7 layoffs as part of the reengineering process, but I  
8 can't project that far into the future, but if we  
9 do the things the way we say we are going to do  
10 them, we make it truly easier and faster and  
11 quicker to process an application, we're going to  
12 need fewer people to do it.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: But the  
14 targeted... We know how many... well, I guess  
15 through attrition you're saying that hopefully that  
16 1,000 would...

17 [crosstalk]

18 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Yes.

19 [crosstalk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: That's through  
21 attrition.

22 COMMISSIONER DOAR: We do... you know,  
23 people come to work for HRA, they spend some time  
24 and then they leave. We have a monthly attrition  
25 that happens in all of our programs every day and

2 so there is turnover in our agency. People retire.  
3 We're hoping that we can achieve this head count  
4 reduction agency-wide without layoff.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: And we  
6 appreciate that. The next and last question is in  
7 your testimony you also spoke about this enhances  
8 our efforts to investigate current Food Stamp cases  
9 arising from data matches and data mining. Now, we  
10 understand we're moving towards technology-based  
11 economy. Everything is basically being...  
12 information is being shared to make everything a  
13 little more streamlined and efficient, but what I  
14 wanted to ask you was this data mining, is it only  
15 for uses in HRA or are there any planned or  
16 foreseeable uses where this information will be  
17 given to a third party? And I'm only asking you  
18 this because we're going through this with inBloom  
19 Inc and the DOE with the information that we  
20 believe it... or I believe is being illegally sold.  
21 I want to make sure that with this data mining that  
22 we're doing it every agency, not just yours.

23 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Mm-hm.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: This is not  
25 something that will be...



2 COMMISSIONER DOAR: No, these programs  
3 have very strict confidentiality requirements under  
4 them...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: [interposing]  
6 Mm-hm.

7 COMMISSIONER DOAR: With regard to the  
8 sharing of data. Now, there is the broader social  
9 services world.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Mm-hm.

11 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Council Member, and  
12 there are certain circumstances where a  
13 commissioner of HRA, because he is the overall  
14 commissioner of social services of the city, may  
15 for purposes of advancing a social services issue;  
16 care of a child, assistance to a family, may share  
17 information with other social services agencies.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: But that would  
19 be ACS?

20 COMMISSIONER DOAR: That would be...

21 [crosstalk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Or who...

23 [crosstalk]

24 COMMISSIONER DOAR: ACS...

25 [crosstalk]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: So that would...

3 [crosstalk]

4 COMMISSIONER DOAR: That would be...

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: [interposing]

6 Okay.

7 COMMISSIONER DOAR: And that... I don't  
8 want you to get the wrong impression that we  
9 aren't... it's consistent with federal and state  
10 rules considering sharing data along those lines,  
11 but that's the extent of it and what we do for our  
12 own self in determining appropriate applications is  
13 only for HRA Food Stamp benefits.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: So there's  
15 nothing that's foreseeable now to take this  
16 information and give it to a third party so that  
17 they can come up with ways to better screen the  
18 process and then that way they would have the  
19 information?

20 COMMISSIONER DOAR: No, not that I  
21 could think of, no. There would be... the  
22 objective is to use the data for program purposes  
23 that are clearly defined in that program and...

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIS: Thank you,  
25 Commissioner.

2 [crosstalk]

3 COMMISSIONER DOAR: That's it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: You have the  
5 balance of my time, Madam Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Thank you. Council  
7 Member Dickens?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you,  
9 Madam Chair and I join with my colleagues,  
10 Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners, for coming  
11 in today for testimony and for your responsiveness  
12 over the years, and I know I look forward to  
13 working with you on Oberia Dempsey in my...

14 [crosstalk]

15 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: District, yes,  
17 but I want to go back to prescreening. What is the  
18 definition of prescreening and does that equate  
19 into their being approved or is there a timeline on  
20 prescreening that if they haven't been approved  
21 that they have to reapply? Can you give me the...

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: Prescreening  
23 is when we... or in terms of what's referenced  
24 here, is really about when we sit with an applicant  
25 we discuss their financial situation, look at their

2 documents and see based on general eligibility  
3 criteria if they would, in fact, be eligible and  
4 then we can help them complete an application at  
5 that point and submit to the operations side of the  
6 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for them  
7 to further enter and evaluate this application  
8 along with all of the supporting documentation.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: So  
10 prescreening does not necessarily mean that they  
11 will ultimately be approved? Is that correct?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: No, it does  
13 not.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: And of that  
15 8,700 that were prescreened, have any of them  
16 ultimately and if so, what is the percentage that  
17 has been approved and how many veterans are  
18 currently receiving Food Stamps and has there been  
19 a significant outreach in the veteran community,  
20 because they suffer with a myriad of problems from  
21 mental health to physical challenges that sometimes  
22 may prevent them from the utilization of computers  
23 to access information.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: Okay, so  
25 you've asked a number of questions.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Yes.

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: And we want  
4 to take it apart a little bit of it at a time, so  
5 let's start with veterans. The HRA outreach staff  
6 go to two veterans hospitals currently and do  
7 outreach services there.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Which ones?  
9 Do you know?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: Brooklyn and  
11 Manhattan.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: And when you  
13 say Manhattan, the one on 23rd.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Uh-huh.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: Correct.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Uh-huh. Oh,  
18 go ahead. I'm sorry, go ahead.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: Okay, so  
20 that's in terms of veterans. [background voices]  
21 Okay.

22 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Was there a  
23 question about percentage of...

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: The  
25 percentage of those folks who have gotten onto

2 ultimately are not in receipt of Supplemental  
3 Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. We would  
4 have to get back to you with that information. I  
5 don't have that, but we do collect that as well.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Alright.

7 Madam Chair, I'm going to ask if you would get the  
8 information that I've requested as well as what's  
9 going on with the Bronx when there's... the Bronx  
10 has a huge veterans hospital that services a huge  
11 number of Latino and black as well as other  
12 veterans and since you did not mention any  
13 particular outreach at that particular site, I am  
14 concerned, so I would like Madam Chair, if  
15 possible, to get that information. Would you be  
16 able to give her... provide her with that?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: We can  
18 certainly provide whatever we're doing in the  
19 Bronx, but if we're not currently in a location  
20 where you would like us to be, we can certainly  
21 take that under advisement and look at how we can  
22 extend our services to that location.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Alright,  
24 'cause I'm sure Madam Chair, since she hails from  
25 the Bronx, would be most interested.

2 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Very much so and I  
3 duly note your concern, thank you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Alright, so  
5 basically that's... I apologize. I thought I was  
6 going to have to run to kibitz, but since my chair  
7 from kibitz is here, I feel less stressed about  
8 running to kibitz. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Thank you.  
10 Commissioner, I want to talk a little bit about the  
11 Intro 1194 and I know that the federal government  
12 acknowledges that there's... we currently...  
13 acknowledges that we have food insecurity in the  
14 U.S and they conduct their own measures around this  
15 issue and I want to gauge your thoughts on would  
16 you agree if this bill would be able to provide us  
17 with the information we know the federal government  
18 cannot provide us at the local level?

19 COMMISSIONER DOAR: My concern... I'm  
20 always for gathering more information and I  
21 wouldn't object to efforts to gather more  
22 information of a more accurate depiction of what's  
23 really going on in our communities, but my main  
24 concern is that if they do it correctly and that  
25 they do it in a way that can be solid data that can

2 stand up to a you know, analysis or review by any  
3 academic institution in the country and that's  
4 going to require some cost and effort. If it's  
5 done incorrectly it can be misleading...

6 [crosstalk]

7 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: And so...

8 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Which...

9 [crosstalk]

10 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: When... and... and  
11 just so...

12 [crosstalk]

13 COMMISSIONER DOAR: So I... that's all  
14 I was trying to point out, is that it just takes  
15 time and effort and resources to do correctly.

16 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: And when you talk  
17 about correctly, what are some of the concerns that  
18 this...

19 COMMISSIONER DOAR: The two concerns  
20 that I have that the sample size be adequate, the  
21 questioning be conducted appropriately and that the  
22 results be gathered correctly and that the results  
23 not be misinterpreted to be something that they're  
24 not by the people that produce the final report.



2 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Uh-huh. OLTPS  
3 already is required to give us at the city level or  
4 they produce an Annual Food Metrics Report, which  
5 addresses the production, processing and  
6 distribution and consumption of food in the city.  
7 Do you agree that... would you agree that hunger  
8 and the absence of adequate food are an integral  
9 part of what's missing in the report?

10 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, I haven't  
11 really looked at the full report, so I don't know  
12 whether that's the only thing missing or there are  
13 other things missing. The food security in the way  
14 that it is reviewed and evaluated by the federal  
15 government has taught us lessons on how to do this  
16 sort of evaluation correctly. Any effort on the  
17 part of the city to supplement the Food Metrics  
18 Report was something along those lines should be  
19 informed by those lessons.

20 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Being the agency  
21 that's charged with making sure that you know, the  
22 SNAP benefits are getting to the families that need  
23 them the most and are running efficiently and that  
24 EFAP is also doing what it needs to do for  
25 vulnerable families, has OLTPS or the Department of

2 Mental Health and Hygiene tried to do any outreach  
3 with HRA around what the needs are for these  
4 reports and how their coming up with ideas to  
5 address these issues?

6 COMMISSIONER DOAR: I can't think of...  
7 from my own knowledge of that kind of interagency  
8 involvement, but that doesn't mean it hasn't  
9 happened. We have fairly collegial discussions  
10 with the Department of Health and I'm happy to  
11 engage in those and would pursue them if you'd like  
12 me to. The one measure that I do want to call  
13 attention to is the Program Access Index, which is  
14 the measure that the federal government uses to  
15 evaluate the states usually for potential awards  
16 for the penetration rate of the Supplemental  
17 Nutrition Assistance Program benefits and we are  
18 now... in 2006, that measurement was below 60  
19 percent in New York City. We are now over 83  
20 percent in New York City, which means that 83  
21 percent of the way the federal government defines  
22 the group of people who would be eligible are  
23 receiving the benefit. We are at levels that the  
24 city has never been at before, and that's a good

2 measure of the effectiveness of the Supplemental  
3 Nutrition Assistance Program.

4 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Okay, when... we  
5 have not... I know that the OLTPS is supposed to  
6 put out their reports in September of every year.  
7 We have not seen the one for 2013. Do you know  
8 when that one is... when are they planning to put  
9 it out?

10 COMMISSIONER DOAR: okay, I'm told by  
11 City Hall imminently.

12 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Imminently.  
13 [laughter] Okay, Council Member Barron has a  
14 question, and we've been joined by Council Member  
15 Ydanis Rodriguez, as well as Council Member Barron.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Alright,  
17 thanks. Well, I'll have to check that out. Thank  
18 you very much, Madam Chair. I wanted to... for us  
19 to really address the problem of food and hunger,  
20 we have to have an accurate assessment of poverty  
21 and I'm always concerned about how the federal  
22 government you know, determines poverty even with  
23 these alarming numbers that... and I believe  
24 it's... is it a family of four making \$22,000,  
25 \$21,000 and then a single family making... a single

2 person making \$11,000. If that's poverty, then  
3 those making \$25,000 are not included in that,  
4 correct, number?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: Yeah, the  
6 measure of the...

7 [crosstalk]

8 COMMISSIONER DOAR: The federal  
9 government establishes the resources available in  
10 the household, though it doesn't count the benefit  
11 dollars that are available as well, so for  
12 instance, the program we're talking about now,  
13 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits,  
14 they're not counted in income on the income side by  
15 the federal government.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And they don't  
17 count their debts or nothing else either.

18 COMMISSIONER DOAR: And they don't  
19 count their earned income...

20 [crosstalk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

22 [crosstalk]

23 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Tax credit or...

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

25 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Right.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: But the bottom  
3 line is that people making \$25,000, people making  
4 \$30,000, people making \$35,000 will not be  
5 included.

6 COMMISSIONER DOAR: You're right.  
7 People...

8 [crosstalk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

10 COMMISSIONER DOAR: People who make...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

12 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Lower middle-class  
13 or middle-class wages...

14 [crosstalk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well, we  
16 ain't...

17 [crosstalk]

18 COMMISSIONER DOAR: I mean they're  
19 struggling in our city.

20 [crosstalk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: We ain't even  
22 talking about middle-class. What we're talking  
23 about...

24 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Right.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: 'Cause \$30,000  
3 is not middle-class.

4 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Mm-hm.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And neither is  
6 \$25,000. I'm just saying that the problem is worse  
7 than we can ever imagine it to be. You know, when  
8 we come in our neighborhoods and we see what the  
9 real poverty is and how people are really  
10 struggling, but how do we get to those numbers and  
11 those people who are really in poverty or the  
12 working poor or however you want to label it...

13 COMMISSIONER DOAR: [interposing] Well,  
14 I think it... my judgment is it's changed. There  
15 isn't any doubt that while a lot of assistance has  
16 been provided to low-wage workers, the wages in our  
17 country have remained stagnant, and so there are  
18 people in that category where you're talking about  
19 a little above the poverty line that feel like  
20 they're not moving up and there is an issue with  
21 our economy, that's true and it has not gotten  
22 better in the last four or five years.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Mm-hm. No, I  
24 know that. I'm not even talking about the middle-  
25 class. I'm not arguing the middle-class argument,

2 because sometimes the working poor and those who  
3 are in very low-income are not included in the  
4 national discussions. Everything is middle-class,  
5 middle-class, middle-class. I'm taking about how  
6 do we reach those people who are poor, who are  
7 really poor, making \$23,000 instead of \$22,000 or  
8 \$24,000 and what is that number? Do you have any  
9 sense of those numbers...

10 [crosstalk]

11 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well...

12 [crosstalk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And...

14 [crosstalk]

15 COMMISSIONER DOAR: We reach them with  
16 programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance  
17 Program.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]

19 Do you have a sense of those numbers?

20 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, we know what  
21 the poverty level is and we know what the numbers  
22 are and as I said, you know, we are at a higher  
23 penetration rate in the Food Stamp Program than  
24 we've ever been, so the extent to which HRA has  
25 configured itself so that supports for people that

2 are struggling can be accessible certainly in the  
3 Food Stamp Program or the Public Health Insurance  
4 Program. We provide Public Health Insurance to  
5 more than 3 million New York City residents. I  
6 think that HRA is reaching people in need every  
7 day.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well, that's a  
9 good answer, but if I was Commissioner of HRA...

10 COMMISSIONER DOAR: [interposing] Do  
11 you want the job?

12 [crosstalk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I would... I  
14 would answer that question [laughter] just like you  
15 answered it; however, I'm really trying to get at  
16 something very serious here. You said 3 million,  
17 right?

18 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Public Health  
19 Insurance recipients...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
21 Right, right.

22 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Who get health  
23 insurance from the...

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing]  
25 Right and I'm saying we need to accurately assess



2 those who are in real poverty. You know, they say  
3 it's 21.1 percent of New Yorkers and that  
4 translates to maybe 1.7 million as it relates to  
5 the federal...

6 COMMISSIONER DOAR: [interposing] Which  
7 doesn't count...

8 [crosstalk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Statistics...

10 [crosstalk]

11 COMMISSIONER DOAR: The benefits  
12 amount.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Which doesn't  
14 count debt.

15 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Right.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And doesn't  
17 count a whole lot of other stuff...

18 [crosstalk]

19 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Yeah.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Too, but the  
21 bottom line that represents that number. We are  
22 missing a whole lot of very poor people and I just  
23 wanted to get a sense of what... do you have a  
24 sense of that number of people that might be making  
25 in the range from say, \$30,000 and...

2 [crosstalk]

3 COMMISSIONER DOAR: I don't have it in  
4 front of me, but we know what the poverty level is.  
5 We know what the alternative poverty measure is.  
6 There's all kinds of different ways of covering it.  
7 We know that there are more people working in New  
8 York City than ever before, which is remarkable  
9 given this economy.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well, there's a  
11 lot of working poor, which may be remarkable to  
12 you...

13 COMMISSIONER DOAR: [interposing] And  
14 that's why we...

15 [crosstalk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: But at that  
17 wage...

18 [crosstalk]

19 COMMISSIONER DOAR: And that's what the  
20 Food Stamp Program does. It provides assistance to  
21 working people.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right, okay,  
23 but see, the Area Median Income, the AMI of our  
24 community is not increasing. You know, in the  
25 community of Bronx, in the South Bronx, the Area

2 Median Income is \$19,000 for a family of four;  
3 \$19,000 in the richest city and country in the  
4 world. The AMI for East New York, Harlem,  
5 Brownsville, you're talking \$28,000, \$30,000. The  
6 poverty rate in the South Bronx is 40 some odd  
7 thousand, and in many of our communities \$30,000.  
8 We're not touching on the problem unless we assess  
9 the scope of it. It is tremendous, particularly  
10 amongst blacks and Latinos. So we have a \$70  
11 billion city budget; \$130 or \$140 billion state  
12 budget in the richest city in the world; developers  
13 making billions of dollars tax-free, subsidies.  
14 Talking about welfare; the corporations get more  
15 welfare than any individual family does.

16 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Mm-hm.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And yet we have  
18 these poverty numbers, the real ones that..

19 [crosstalk]

20 COMMISSIONER DOAR: And, okay.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Are not being  
22 touched or reached...

23 [crosstalk]

24 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, the agency...

25 [crosstalk]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: By the...

3 [crosstalk]

4 COMMISSIONER DOAR: I represent...

5 [crosstalk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Let me finish,  
7 Commissioner. Let me finish...

8 [crosstalk]

9 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Yeah.

10 [crosstalk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Commissioner.

12 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Okay.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER: That is not being  
14 reached or touched by some of the SNAP or other  
15 programs that we have, and I'm just concerned about  
16 that. I don't want us to have you know, flowery  
17 hearings and come and talk numbers and make people  
18 think...

19 [crosstalk]

20 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Alright.

21 [crosstalk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Things are  
23 great. When you walk into the neighborhoods the  
24 poverty is painful and some of it leads to crime;  
25 some of it leads to mental health issues; some of

2 it leads to homelessness because we're not  
3 addressing income and poverty and a more equitable  
4 distribution of wealth and income. That's a whole  
5 other question, but go ahead, Commissioner.

6 COMMISSIONER DOAR: No, I would just  
7 say that looking at the long scope of history, the  
8 extent to which, for instance, the program that  
9 we're talking about today serves more people with  
10 more assistance than ever before. So that may be  
11 enough, but if you're going to look at the history  
12 it's more than ever before, and I am proud of that  
13 and I am proud of the agency's work to make that  
14 happen.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And I'm only  
16 saying to you, and then I'll stop, Madam Chair, I  
17 just finished talking to Dennis Walcott, the  
18 Commissioner of Education. He's saying more people  
19 are graduating more than ever before...

20 COMMISSIONER DOAR: [interposing] I'm  
21 happy to associate myself, yes.

22 [crosstalk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And more of are  
24 not college prepared than ever before. So even  
25

2 though we have more... you have more poverty than  
3 ever before.

4 COMMISSIONER DOAR: That's not true.

5 [crosstalk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So when you  
7 talk about the more the gap between the rich and  
8 poor, it's wider than ever before.

9 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well...

10 [crosstalk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So... hold on,  
12 Commissioner. So when we talk about more  
13 relatively speaking than we had, and I don't want  
14 to see an education system where only 13 percent of  
15 black and Latino children were prepared for college  
16 after graduation and then you come and say well,  
17 more are prepared now; we're up to 15 percent or 16  
18 percent or you say that more people are receiving  
19 this now than ever before...

20 COMMISSIONER DOAR: [interposing] And  
21 working.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Which might be  
23 true, but if we look at the rate of poverty's  
24 increase, that more may not be sufficient when you  
25 have hunger pangs.

2 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, I agree it's  
3 not sufficient. We always want to do better. The  
4 poverty rates in the city of New York reached a  
5 peak in 1994. We are down from there. We have  
6 been flat for the last five or six years, and  
7 that's discouraging, but during this period from  
8 2000 for instance, in the 20 largest cities in  
9 America, every city saw an increase in poverty,  
10 that is correct, except New York. It didn't go  
11 down, but it remained flat. So I think that you're  
12 right; there's more to be done. We're not done  
13 yet. We've still got to keep working, but I don't  
14 think we should not recognize the efforts of people  
15 like the 14,000 people who work at HRA to provide  
16 significant supports for working New Yorkers.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: well, finally,  
18 I'll say that poverty nationally, after the Bush;  
19 the horrible Bush Administration, went up.

20 COMMISSIONER DOAR: It has gone up.

21 [crosstalk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: From...

23 [crosstalk]

24 COMMISSIONER DOAR: You're right,  
25 nationally...

2 [crosstalk]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes, it has...

4 [crosstalk]

5 COMMISSIONER DOAR: In the last five  
6 years.

7 [crosstalk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRONE: It has gone up  
9 from 24 percent to 27 percent, particularly in our  
10 communities and we have 13 million people  
11 nationally and there's 48 million people  
12 nationally. Poverty has gone up and I submit to  
13 you it's a major problem in New York as well the  
14 working poor; the COLA has gone up; the Cost of  
15 Living Assessment has gone up, but the income  
16 hasn't gone up proportionately to that, so you  
17 have... we have a serious situation here in New  
18 York and I don't want us to misread it with  
19 statistics that might say poverty is coming down,  
20 crime's coming down and all of this and then you go  
21 and deal with the reality in the neighborhoods and  
22 it's a whole different story, Commissioner.

23 COMMISSIONER DOAR: I think we agree we  
24 need higher wages. It would be nice if the economy  
25 provided jobs that paid higher wages.



2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And it would be  
3 nice if the Bloomberg Administration and its \$70  
4 billion had a higher priority on poverty and  
5 programs that gave out food and other things to  
6 those who are poor if it was a higher up priority.  
7 With \$70 billion...

8 [crosstalk]

9 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, you know...

10 [crosstalk]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: We could do  
12 way...

13 [crosstalk]

14 COMMISSIONER DOAR: I...

15 [crosstalk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Better.

17 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Alright, well, I'd  
18 have to challenge on that because I think we have a  
19 very high priority on these issues and you know, if  
20 you're going to... well, let's just say I would say  
21 we have... the Mayor's made it clear to me that  
22 these issues are very important to him. We talk  
23 about it all the time and I think we've made  
24 significant progress.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well, let me  
3 say to you that what indicates priority is money.  
4 The Bible says where a person heart is so lies his  
5 treasure or their treasure.

6 COMMISSIONER DOAR: And we've  
7 perceived...

8 [crosstalk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So priority is  
10 not a conversation; priority is where the dollars  
11 go.

12 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Right and  
13 significant dollars are going into this program.

14 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Thank you, Council  
15 Member. Commissioner, has the CEO, the Mayor's  
16 CEO, the Center for Economic Opportunity influenced  
17 HRA's policy in administering SNAP and do you...  
18 and if it has do you credit it for...

19 COMMISSIONER DOAR: [interposing] Well,  
20 the significant...

21 [crosstalk]

22 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: More people...

23 [crosstalk]

24 COMMISSIONER DOAR: The...

25 [crosstalk]

2 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Knowing about the  
3 program?

4 COMMISSIONER DOAR: The Center for  
5 Economic Opportunity has done... we do many things  
6 with the CEO and one of the things that in this  
7 particular area, the thing we have done most is the  
8 measurement that they advocated for and which  
9 President Obama wanted to be added as a  
10 supplemental measure in the national measure takes  
11 into account the value of Supplemental Nutrition  
12 Assistance benefits in households and when that's  
13 done as it is done, and now the supplemental  
14 measure at the federal level partly inspired by the  
15 CEO, or by the CEO or by us whenever we do it. It  
16 shows the dramatic extent to which the benefits in  
17 the program we're talking about today help rise  
18 families and households out of poverty. So there  
19 we definitely... the CEO's role in terms of sort of  
20 informing the discussion and encouraging us to be  
21 sure that our program is accessible to New Yorkers  
22 has been a major factor in the rise and the access  
23 index up to an amount more than 80 percent.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: We've been joined  
3 by Council Member Brad Lander. Yes? Questions?  
4 Yes? Council Member Rose.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Hi, Commissioner.  
6 You know, the biggest issue for my constituents is  
7 the application or the recertification process.  
8 They go and oftentimes they have to make another  
9 trip back because they need other documents. They  
10 wait you know, hours to be seen. What's being done  
11 to sort of streamline this process? Is there any  
12 move to make recertification or the application  
13 process online or to coalesce it with other benefit  
14 applications that an applicant might be... have  
15 previously applied for...

16 COMMISSONER DOAR: [interposing] Mm-hm.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Or applying for?

18 COMMISSIONER DOAR: We have made many  
19 efforts to make the process faster and easier,  
20 including making it online. We've set up self-  
21 service PC banks in many of our offices, where now  
22 70 to 80 percent of people come in and start their  
23 application on their own and appear to like  
24 applying that way. We now do phone interviews with  
25 many, many more than we ever used to do; have set

2 up a time convenient to the applicant and the  
3 recertification candidate. So I think we've made  
4 great efforts to make it less onerous in terms of  
5 the process...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [interposing] Mm-  
7 hm.

8 COMMISSIONER DOAR: And if I've missed  
9 any, Gary's going to add.

10 ASSISTANT DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JENKINS:  
11 And there are various ways in which one, once HRA  
12 requests documentation, they don't necessarily have  
13 to come into a center to submit that application.  
14 They can fax it in; they can mail it in. In the  
15 future with reengineering, we're going to have the  
16 capability for an applicant or a recipient to  
17 upload their documents at a self-service scanning  
18 area so there's no real interaction, no wait time  
19 in the centers as you just suggested. In addition,  
20 on Staten Island is one of those eight centers  
21 where we have a PC bank and the person who is  
22 coming in to apply for benefits don't have to wait.  
23 They can go right to a PC and apply and be at  
24 accessnyc.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And how recent is  
3 that?

4 ASSISTANT DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JENKINS:  
5 That's been the last couple of months we've been  
6 rolling out PC banks at the eight locations and  
7 we're continuing and within the next month, in  
8 December, we're rolling out two additional sites.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, so  
10 you're...

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL:  
12 [interposing] In addition, I'd...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [interposing] Mm-  
14 hm.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: I'd just  
16 like to add we also have 51 community-based  
17 organizations that can also process  
18 recertifications.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: okay and so is  
20 there any plan to extend it beyond the 10 PC banks  
21 that you're now... you have a... you're planning  
22 two more.

23 ASSISTANT DEPUTY COMMISSIONER JENKINS:  
24 Yes, two more, yes.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Will there be...

2 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Yeah, if it  
3 continues to go as well as it's going, we would  
4 extend it to being the preferred way we think  
5 applicants should apply for Food Stamps. So when  
6 they come into our offices, rather than stand in  
7 line, they apply online using a PC bank with the  
8 sort of elbow assistance that's available should  
9 they need it.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Yeah, oftentimes  
11 new regulations are sort of promulgated very  
12 frequently, you know what's done, and SNAP  
13 recipients seem to learn about them by word of  
14 mouth. What's being done to make sure that people  
15 learn of the new regulations in a timely manner?  
16 It would even be good before they were rolled out.  
17 What's the process? Are there pamphlets, direct  
18 mailing...

19 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, there's a lot  
20 of materials that we prepare and also the Food  
21 Stamp... the federal government does a lot of  
22 promotional activity around the issue, and we can  
23 get you a collection of all those things we  
24 distribute, and as I mentioned in the reengineering  
25 issue, Cecile is leading up an outreach effort to

2 all community-based organizations so they can  
3 spread the word as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And this is just  
5 a personal note. I think the use of the euphemism  
6 "food insecurity" for hunger is shameful. What is  
7 the purpose of...

8 COMMISSIONER DOAR: [interposing] Well,  
9 it...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I...

11 [crosstalk]

12 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, actually  
13 it...

14 [crosstalk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Really.

16 COMMISSIONER DOAR: There's a  
17 controversial discussion. The United States  
18 Department of Agriculture, as I understand it, that  
19 does the study discourages using the word hunger in  
20 replacement for food insecurity.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Why? If that's  
22 the reality; people are hungry and...

23 [crosstalk]

24 COMMISSIONER DOAR: But it's not...

25 [crosstalk]



2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Benefits are not  
3 adequate, why are we...

4 [crosstalk]

5 COMMISSIONER DOAR: I can...

6 [crosstalk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Trying to hide  
8 that?

9 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, I don't...  
10 the reason they give is because of the sort of the  
11 way in which the survey is conducted. It's a  
12 series of questions that have to do with the  
13 ability to afford food. I'm just speaking...

14 [crosstalk]

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Mm-hm.

16 COMMISSIONER DOAR: For them. This is  
17 the United States Department of Agriculture as I  
18 understand it. I think what I'll have is our...  
19 have research and evaluation send you the document  
20 that USDA puts out on this and then you can see for  
21 yourself why they do that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I understand what  
23 the purpose of the document is and I know what  
24 they're assessing, but is this ingenuous to call it  
25 food insecurity when we're talking about hunger? I

2 mean whether a person can afford the food is sort  
3 of you know, a moot point. The point is they can't  
4 afford the food. They can't afford to feed their  
5 families.

6 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, yeah, I... we  
7 just...

8 [crosstalk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So I mean...

10 [crosstalk]

11 COMMISSIONER DOAR: This may be  
12 something we can...

13 [crosstalk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So the...

15 [crosstalk]

16 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Agree on.

17 [crosstalk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Purpose of the  
19 survey is to find out how many people can't afford  
20 to buy food?

21 COMMISSIONER DOAR: That's the purpose,  
22 that's correct.

23 [crosstalk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And so...

25 [crosstalk]

2 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Yes.

3 [crosstalk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: In so doing, you  
5 miss the basic premise that I can't afford to buy  
6 food; therefore, I'm hungry. Like I said, it's  
7 just a personal side and I think the use of that  
8 euphemism and to the fact that the survey doesn't  
9 go to the next point is a waste of our time. Why  
10 bother to survey and what are you going to do when  
11 the result of that survey says I am hungry? What  
12 are we doing about that part? Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: And I think it  
14 speaks to what... right, what the CEO did in  
15 calculating their own poverty measure and what they  
16 included in that, which was non-cash benefits. You  
17 know it took into account employment costs,  
18 transportation, childcare and when you asking those  
19 types of questions, I think it raises the concerns  
20 that Council Member Rose is making in that a family  
21 of four earning \$32,000 can be considered living at  
22 the poverty line, right, because you have all these  
23 other things that you need to take care of. You  
24 need to pay rent, you need to pay maybe health  
25 benefits and so at the end of the day, you may just

2 not have enough food to buy... enough money to buy  
3 food; therefore, you're left hungry, not that you  
4 know, you can't afford to buy food, right? Council  
5 Member Chin.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Madam  
7 Chair. Commissioner, I wanted to focus a little  
8 bit about on really our seniors. What I have  
9 noticed that with a lot of the churches and  
10 community organizations and organizations that  
11 serve homeless, they are finding more and more  
12 seniors on the food pantry line you know, waiting  
13 long hours and it's... so it's like I mean how is  
14 HRA doing to really reach out to them to see if  
15 they can you know, qualify for Food Stamp benefits?  
16 Do you only do it just through senior centers or  
17 there are other ways of really focusing on seniors?

18 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Well, maybe Cecile  
19 wants to talk about outreach efforts, but certainly  
20 we... not just us, but the federal and state  
21 government promote the program to a wide range of  
22 groups and I know USDA had a whole promotional  
23 activity centered around seniors. We definitely...  
24 when I was at the state, we put in a program that  
25 allowed for people to get automatic benefit

2 issuances if they were on Social Security and they  
3 were in the home, so I think there is activities  
4 along those lines. I'd like to get the statistics  
5 with regard to the age breakdown of our recipients  
6 so you can see the extent to which seniors are  
7 participating in the program. Cecile, do you want  
8 to add anything about the...

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: Yes, in  
10 terms of the emergency feeding programs, HRA's Food  
11 Stamp outreach staff or the staff... the outreach  
12 staff go to each of the feeding programs and  
13 provide Supplemental Nutrition Assistance outreach  
14 at these sites. We talk to seniors, we see if  
15 they're eligible, we will prescreen them and help  
16 them apply if that is in fact what they can do. In  
17 addition to that, we also have senior centers that  
18 the Supplemental Nutrition outreach staff go to  
19 regularly to speak with seniors about the benefits,  
20 about the program and prescreen them and help them  
21 apply. So that's sort of the bulk of what we do,  
22 but we do a lot of work with seniors.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Do you work with  
24 the organizations that provide food pantries or  
25

2 that do like emergency food like Coalition for the  
3 Homeless?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSONER NOEL: We work  
5 directly with feeding programs.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Mm-hm.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: So right now  
8 there are 492 EFAP programs. These are providers  
9 that we... that are part of our membership and  
10 within that we make sure that each and every one of  
11 these providers receive Supplemental Nutrition  
12 Assistance enrollment activities, so outreach  
13 activities. So they go there and help them for...

14 [crosstalk]

15 COMMISSIONER NOEL: And...

16 [crosstalk]

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: The  
18 customers that visit these sites.

19 COMMISSIONER DOAR: And Council Member,  
20 if there are groups that you would like us to make  
21 us an extra effort for, we'd be happy to do that.  
22 I have to say in the six years I've been in HRA or  
23 seven years I've been in HRA, the outreach efforts  
24 is not... I've never had someone say, "I'm trying  
25 to get you to come and you never come." We do do

2 it, but if there's a place we're missing, let us  
3 know and we'll send one of our teams out.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Definitely. I  
5 think some of the churches have reached out that  
6 have long lines outside of their food pantry. It  
7 might be helpful to really help people do the  
8 prescreening...

9 [crosstalk]

10 COMMISSIONER DOAR: I think you're  
11 going to...

12 [crosstalk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: And then...

14 COMMISSIONER DOAR: [interposing]  
15 Right.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Try to enroll  
17 them at the same time.

18 COMMISSIONER DOAR: Right.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: The other... the  
20 question is that, okay, I mean you go to... you  
21 talk about you have 51 CBOs that does process  
22 recertification. Do they also do the application  
23 process for people?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: Yes, they  
25 do.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Do you... can we  
3 get a list of...

4 COMMISSIONER DOAR: [interposing] Yeah,  
5 sure.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Who are these  
7 CBOs and then maybe...

8 [crosstalk]

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NOEL: We'd be  
10 happy to send you a list.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Can they do that?  
12 Yeah, okay. Thank you, Madam Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Thank you.  
14 Commissioner, clearly this is just... this is an  
15 ongoing conversation that you know, didn't start  
16 and doesn't end with the Bloomberg Administration.  
17 I want to thank you for your testimony and your  
18 collaboration over the years. Whether we agreed on  
19 a issue or disagreed on as issue, we were able to  
20 do it respectfully and able to then figure out what  
21 would be the best solution and outcome for  
22 vulnerable families across the city. A lot has  
23 changed you know, with the way HRA and some of the  
24 services that are being rendered to vulnerable  
25 families are done I think you know for our nation.



2 A lot still remains the same. We need to get a  
3 real commitment from government to shift the way it  
4 looks at what poverty is and what they use to  
5 measure you know, what poverty is, right? we need  
6 to make sure that we're taking into account other  
7 responsibilities of families, other  
8 responsibilities that they're dealing with to make  
9 sure that you know, a family is able to not only  
10 sustain themselves on that road to self-  
11 sufficiency, but is also able to meet the basic  
12 needs of putting food on the table and so I know  
13 that I'm committed to making sure that you know,  
14 vulnerable New Yorkers continue to have the voice  
15 they need to move in that path, and I want to thank  
16 you for the work that you've done over the years.  
17 I believe this is the last time we will be in this  
18 kind of setting, but nonetheless, I know that you  
19 know, some of the policies that were implemented,  
20 the good policies, that were implemented in HRA we  
21 will continue to build on them and we'll continue  
22 to make sure that no New York City family who's  
23 vulnerable and placed in a position whether they  
24 have to pay rent or buy food for their family

2 continues you know, having to do so, and so thank  
3 you so much for coming today to testify.

4 Our next panel will be Triada Stampas  
5 from Food Bank of New City; Joel Berg from the New  
6 York City Coalition Against Hunger; Kate MacKenzie  
7 from City Harvest and Beth Finkel from AARP.

8 [Pause]

9 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Whenever you're  
10 ready you can begin.

11 [Pause]

12 BETH FINKEL: Go first, so I'm sorry,  
13 'cause I have to dash off to two other meetings.  
14 So I'm Beth Finkel. I am the State Director for  
15 AARP New York, and good afternoon, Council Member  
16 Palma and other members of the General Welfare  
17 Committee. I appreciate very much the opportunity  
18 to talk on hunger. It's something that AARP both  
19 nationally, at the state level and at the New York  
20 City level has been very immersed in and very  
21 committed to. We have two and half million members  
22 in New York State and almost 800,000 in New York  
23 City. Our foundation has been doing a lot of work  
24 on this issue actually in partnership with the  
25 other groups that are at the table with us and we

2 also just did a White Paper on state policy, which  
3 again, my co-panelists here were very contributory  
4 to. I just want to thank you for bringing up the  
5 issue of older adults' hunger, and particularly  
6 Council Member Chin, thank you for bringing up the  
7 issue of seniors; appreciate it. Well, we're  
8 particularly happy you're looking at Local Law 1194  
9 to amend a New York City Charter and Administrative  
10 Code so we can better assess the tools and  
11 understand hunger among New Yorkers and really be  
12 able to measure it. Hunger is a very key issue. I  
13 know that my co-panelists here are going to talk a  
14 lot more on the stats around hunger, both at the  
15 city, state and federal level, but we do know that  
16 during these economic times, it's harder and harder  
17 to make... for so many families and older adults to  
18 make ends meet and of course, with the new federal  
19 changes that are proposed; the different scenarios  
20 around the Farm Bill it just gets more and more  
21 desperate. So basically, our position is that  
22 we're very, very supportive of this proposal. We  
23 believe that it can provide much needed information  
24 to help target resources of those in need. Local  
25 Law 1194 requires the Director of the Mayor's

2 Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability in  
3 collaboration with the Commissioner of Department  
4 of Health and Mental Hygiene and HRA and other  
5 individuals, that they will look at the indicators  
6 to assess and track the level of food security in  
7 New York and including but not limited to a survey  
8 of New Yorkers regarding their level of food  
9 security. In addition, a report would be developed  
10 on these indicators to be included in the Annual  
11 City Food System Metrics Report. The report shall  
12 aggregate such indicators by borough and community  
13 board as well. AARP believes that food insecurity  
14 among elderly is a growing problem. We actually  
15 know at the New York State level that one out of  
16 every two older adults who are eligible for Food  
17 Stamps actually are not receiving that; that's a  
18 state data number. So in addition to gathering the  
19 information by the survey relating to the level of  
20 food insecurity, we're also hoping that it will be  
21 used to target SNAP outreach and looking at cross  
22 sharing of the data. We're also looking at this  
23 across New York State, looking at shared data, both  
24 intra-agency and interagency and you'll see that in  
25 our report. Also looking at the standard medical

2 deduction and how we could have a standard medical  
3 deduction rather than ask people to fill that out,  
4 so often people can't remember or don't have good  
5 records for it and it's really a shame. And we're  
6 also looking at recertification for seniors; why it  
7 cannot be a longer recertification period and  
8 finally, we're looking at the application process  
9 in general and making it less cumbersome. So I  
10 thank you. I'm so sorry that I have to run, but  
11 thank you for this opportunity and thank you, the  
12 graciousness of my co-panelists who I've left to be  
13 alone here.

14 [crosstalk]

15 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Beth, if I can just  
16 ask you one question.

17 BETH FINKEL: Sure.

18 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: And just say thank  
19 you to the AARP. I know that in my district at  
20 least two or three times a year there's a forum put  
21 together where seniors are... or anyone over 50 is  
22 coming and making sure they're connected to all the  
23 resources that they're eligible for, so I want to  
24 thank you for that partnership. You mentioned the  
25

2 one in two of all those not receiving Food Stamps.

3 These are...

4 BETH FINKEL: [interposing] The  
5 statewide number for older adults.

6 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: And...

7 [crosstalk]

8 BETH FINKEL: One in every two...

9 [crosstalk]

10 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: And do we have a  
11 sense on a clear understanding of why they're not  
12 receiving? It's a lack of information; they don't  
13 know they're eligible; just they don't want to go  
14 through the process?

15 BETH FINKEL: I think many of those  
16 reasons. Part of it is that they don't know about  
17 it; there's the stigma attached. I think that  
18 since the fingerprinting was eliminated in New York  
19 that was a big gain, but the word has not gotten  
20 out enough.

21 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: [interposing] Mm-  
22 hm.

23 BETH FINKEL: We need to work a little  
24 bit harder on that and I think we're all in the  
25 midst of that, and we need to do more sign-up days.

2 There needs to be more budget money put aside for  
3 SNAP enrollment. Every time we do it, they come  
4 forward and they sign up and I think part of the  
5 advantage of AARP, to be honest, is it's kind of  
6 like a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. It's  
7 not like a government agency or someone else. It's  
8 if you're you know, AARP says it's okay, you've  
9 worked hard all your life. You're living in you  
10 know, multi-generational families. You can bring  
11 more into that household. Step forward, don't  
12 be... and actually the other advocates here can  
13 speak so much more eloquently you know,  
14 particularly about this, so...

15 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Thank you, Beth.

16 BETH FINKEL: Oh, thank you.

17 JOEL BERG: Hi, I'm Joel Berg,  
18 Executive Director of the New York City Coalition  
19 Against Hunger and I thank you, and my colleagues  
20 thank you, Chair Palma, for all your tireless  
21 leadership on these issues and I also want to thank  
22 the Bloomberg Administration. It's not a state  
23 secret we haven't agreed on every little thing, but  
24 Commissioner Doar's testimony, particularly of how  
25 we... and they didn't lay off a single person in

2 the seven years there was vital while a lot of  
3 other social service agencies across the country  
4 did, hurting the middle-class employees who worked  
5 for the municipality and hurting the ability of  
6 low-income people to access you know, benefits and  
7 we appreciate their work with CBOs such as ours and  
8 we appreciate... I see Kim Kessler from the Mayor's  
9 Office, that work with us on Summer Meals you know,  
10 outreach. I will say though you won't be shocked  
11 to know the rosy assessment of that things aren't  
12 as bad in New York as let's say, Detroit, so  
13 everything's great. You know, I always quip that  
14 you know, I'm surprised the Commissioner doesn't  
15 compare us to Calcutta or you know, or New Delhi or  
16 something. There's no question that according to  
17 the U.S. Census Bureau, not us unreliable  
18 advocates, there are more people living below the  
19 meager federal poverty line today than the day  
20 Mayor Bloomberg took office, even though the  
21 network of the billionaires over just the last two  
22 years has increased by 60 percent. The 53  
23 wealthiest people in New York City now have nearly  
24 \$200 billion or about four times the entire city  
25 budget and the truth of the matter is that even



1  
2 though you have one type of USDA statistic about  
3 increasing SNAP participation, the other way of  
4 looking at it is at least half a million people in  
5 this city, half a million people who remain  
6 eligible for SNAP are not getting it. Out of 26  
7 big city school districts in the United States, New  
8 York City is dead last and I've said it before and  
9 I'll say it again, it's embarrassing enough when we  
10 lose to Boston or Philadelphia in football or  
11 baseball, but when we lose to them in feeding our  
12 children it's truly inexcusable.

13           Just a few wonkish moments about food  
14 insecurity and the measuring, because I was at USDA  
15 when the measure was developed in the late 1990s.  
16 I was not involved in developing it. I was  
17 involved in explaining it to the public, which is  
18 very difficult. Let me be crystal clear. When it  
19 was first used by the Clinton Administration, the  
20 U.S. Department of Agriculture did use the term  
21 hunger. Now, to be precise, it was a subsection of  
22 food insecurity, so not everybody who was food  
23 insecure had hunger in their household, but they  
24 did use it and it was the Bush Administration who  
25 stopped using the term, even though it's exactly

1  
2 the same methodology and the Obama Administration,  
3 while they've not exactly replaced it in the  
4 report, everyone from the President to the First  
5 Lady to the Secretary of Agriculture do describe  
6 hunger in America.

7           When USDA releases its data, it  
8 releases it on a national level and a statewide  
9 level, but for most municipalities the sample size  
10 is not large enough to go to a citywide level. It  
11 is for New York City and we do analyze this and  
12 tomorrow we'll be releasing our data over the last  
13 three years, but we know from the previous years'  
14 data that roughly when you average three years to  
15 get a big enough sample size for New York City,  
16 roughly one in six New Yorkers and one in five  
17 children live in households that can't afford  
18 enough food. It's roughly between 1.3 to 1.4  
19 million low-income New Yorkers. Now, that's an  
20 undercount for a lot of reasons. People don't  
21 always admit it to questionnaires from the  
22 government. Ironically, homeless people aren't  
23 counted in that methodology, so the more homeless  
24 people we have actually it falsely deflates the  
25 numbers because if they were marginally housed and

1 hungry and become homeless and hungrier, they  
2 actually get counted as less hungry 'cause they're  
3 no longer counted. The sample size is generally  
4 large enough to go down to the borough level except  
5 for Staten Island. So we strongly support Intro  
6 1194. My only caveat is suggest some language to  
7 give the next administration a little flexibility,  
8 but if they believe they can use federal data  
9 instead of spending a million dollars to collect  
10 the data themselves, I would hope the new  
11 administration would have that flexibility.  
12

13 In terms of the Food Stamps cuts that  
14 were just implemented, I do think the Commissioner  
15 did get the numbers wrong. Nationwide for a  
16 family of three it's not \$10.00. It's an average  
17 of \$29.00, and because New York has higher benefits  
18 than the nation as a whole, our cuts are higher  
19 than the nation as a whole. I just met a woman  
20 going to City College, trying to put herself  
21 through college with two kids; she lost \$45.00.  
22 And I just had a wonkish debate with a colleague in  
23 D.C. who's been in the beltway a little too long  
24 and oh, this is little things statistically, blah,  
25 blah, blah and I said, "You look this woman in the

1 eye and explain to her that it's just a statistic;  
2 that before she had three weeks worth of food out  
3 of month. Now she has maybe two weeks out of the  
4 month. It's not a statistic. This is a reality."

5  
6 The good news I would say is that we do  
7 have a Mayor-elect and a City Council that act more  
8 progressive than the ones that preceded them, who  
9 are all dedicated to doing something serious about  
10 this issue including the Public Advocate-elect and  
11 a Comptroller-elect, the most progressive slate of  
12 elected officials in my certainly adult lifetime  
13 and perhaps in modern New York City history. But I  
14 am reminded of the story of when a labor leader  
15 came into Franklin Roosevelt and said, "Mr.  
16 President, I'd like you to do yes to this and this  
17 and this." The President said, "I agree with you.  
18 Now it's your job to go out there and make me do  
19 it." And I presume it to be our job to build the  
20 support in the public for these progressive  
21 agendas.

22 And real quickly, I will say that Pre-  
23 K, universal Pre-K has been pushed as an anti-  
24 poverty initiative, which it clearly is. It's been  
25 pushed as an educational agenda, which it surely

1 is, but I also want to reinforce that it is an  
2 anti-hunger agenda. If kids are in Pre-K, they  
3 tend to get a breakfast or a lunch or both paid for  
4 entirely by the federal government, so I can't  
5 stress enough the importance of supporting  
6 initiatives to enact universal Pre-K, even if a few  
7 billionaires claim they can no longer live in the  
8 city if they have to pay a few more pennies a  
9 month. I've said it before and I'll say it again,  
10 if Donald Trump is so unpatriotic that he can't  
11 live here anymore because he has to pay a few more  
12 pennies to make sure his neighbor's kids get  
13 education, I'll buy his bus ticket out. SNAP  
14 participation there's a heck of a lot we can do  
15 including making sure that people who are  
16 unemployed and looking for work can continue to get  
17 SNAP as they're looking for work. Congress may  
18 take away that option, but assuming they don't, the  
19 Mayor should absolutely take that option. WE  
20 strongly support, and I'm sure you'll hear about it  
21 more from our colleagues, the Food for Learning,  
22 the Lunch for Learning proposal to have free  
23 universal school lunches. We certainly support  
24 universal in-classroom school breakfasts that every  
25

1 kid in the city should get. I know Councilman  
2 Levin's been very active in that. We're the last  
3 really big city in the United States who hasn't  
4 done it. I hope Mayor de Blasio doesn't waste a  
5 second in implementing that and we strongly support  
6 his call for the city to have a higher minimum  
7 wage. I agree with Commissioner Doar that the top  
8 answer is more people to earn more. You know, keep  
9 in mind, two-thirds of people in the Food Stamps  
10 Program are children and people with disabilities  
11 and seniors, but for the able-bodied adult and for  
12 the working parents certainly earning more, and  
13 this would not cost the city a penny, is the top  
14 answer to this problem. Thank you.

15  
16 KATE MACKENZIE: Good afternoon, nice  
17 to see you all. Chair Palma, thanks for having this  
18 hearing and for all that you've done. Council  
19 Member Chin, it's nice to see you and Council  
20 Member Levin, I think you're my personal council  
21 member, so it's great to see you as well. I want  
22 to just touch briefly on the food insecurity  
23 proposal, Intro 1194. The Commissioner was  
24 absolutely correct in the sense that it is a very  
25 arduous research study that's undergone each year

1  
2 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and it's  
3 complicated in that hunger and food insecurity are  
4 very subjective, meaning you do answer questions,  
5 which you may be uncomfortable answering. You  
6 know, it's quite often when people are interviewed  
7 at a soup kitchen or a food pantry for them to come  
8 away with the findings saying that they're not food  
9 secure because they are in fact at a soup kitchen  
10 or a food pantry, so it's very, very challenging  
11 and also quite personal to answer to someone you  
12 don't know these questions about can you feed your  
13 kids. So I just want to offer that Feeding  
14 America, which is the umbrella organizations for  
15 organizations like the Food Bank and City Harvest  
16 has a new research called Map the Meal Gap, which  
17 takes census level data of the American Community  
18 Survey at the five-year estimates, which are the  
19 most precise, in the categories of poverty, percent  
20 African American, percent Hispanic, percent of the  
21 median income and unemployment, as well as a new  
22 category this year, which is homeownership. So  
23 it's really a plugging and chugging of numbers,  
24 which gets at the same figure of food insecurity  
25 that the national data does and it's very... so one

2 doesn't need to go through the steps of getting a  
3 large sample size and people to answer a ton of  
4 questions, and can get down to the sub-county  
5 level. I provided as an addendum to my testimony  
6 that what those figures are for New York City for  
7 each of the boroughs and in some cases where City  
8 Harvest has a healthy neighborhood, you'll find  
9 that figure for those neighborhoods as well. And  
10 so we just really want to underscore our support  
11 for this, for this inclusion into the Food Metrics  
12 Report, which is itself a, you know, tremendous  
13 amount of information that's really needed in the  
14 city and really would make it much more holistic by  
15 including something around food insecurity. It is  
16 challenging, you know. It's not like tuberculosis  
17 or HIV or even obesity in that we can measure a  
18 condition in the way that we've can for those  
19 diseases and we can't do that for hunger and food  
20 insecurity, so having you know, more of a common  
21 understanding about the challenges in front of us.  
22 And I would also argue that in the spectrum of  
23 hunger to you know, food security where we don't  
24 need to worry about where our next meal is going to  
25 come from is kind of similar to the spectrum that



1 Council Member Barron pointed out about poverty to  
2 what one would consider to be self-sufficient, and  
3 there is a huge gap there and you know, we are very  
4 clear on talking about poverty and what one needs  
5 to survive in the city and we are matching up the  
6 term hunger and food insecurity, and you know, do  
7 we also want to live in a city where so many people  
8 need to worry about where their next meal is going  
9 to come from. So just because it may not be quote  
10 "hunger" doesn't mean that we can run away from the  
11 problem, and so I think that whether you know...  
12 also we've got a tremendous amount of academic  
13 institutions in this city that would be willing to  
14 partner on a study like this. The Feeding America  
15 work comes from the University of Chicago and I  
16 know that they'd be very interested in being an  
17 advisory group or lending their experience and  
18 expertise to a New York City initiative.

19  
20           So as you know, City Harvest is  
21 rescuing and delivering 46 million pounds of food  
22 this year. I'm not going to get into the SNAP  
23 cuts, just suffice to say that we absolutely you  
24 know, are very concerned. We don't... and I think  
25 the question was posed to the Commissioner about

1  
2 what do you expect to see in kitchens and pantries  
3 as a result. The fact of the matter is we don't  
4 know. We also know that just because a family is  
5 receiving less benefits, that doesn't mean that the  
6 next day or that night they're going to go to a  
7 kitchen or a pantry, so it could be a very delayed  
8 response, but we do at City Harvest is, and I know  
9 the Food Bank as well, we are bracing for the  
10 absolute worst. I also need to say that it's not  
11 like things were flush right now. You know, for  
12 most I would say... I don't know if most is the  
13 accurate. A fair number of soup kitchens and food  
14 pantries in New York City get food from the EFAP  
15 Program provided by the city, Food Bank and City  
16 Harvest and none of those programs are flush with  
17 food at the moment, so the fact that we'll probably  
18 be experiencing an even sharper demand is very  
19 alarming to us, and I will say this: also, I noted  
20 in the Commissioner's testimony whereas you know, I  
21 would say in the written testimony the sharp  
22 numbers of increases that we're seeing. If you  
23 compare 2008 at the start of recession to where we  
24 are in 2013, Council Member Palma, your borough has  
25 seen a 72 percent in the visits to emergency food

1 providers. In the Bronx... in Brooklyn, excuse me,  
2 that number's 42 percent. So rather than saying  
3 isn't that great? We're serving this number of you  
4 know, meals and food and pounds of food in these...  
5 you know, that's alarming to us, whereas coming  
6 from the Commissioner's standpoint of serving that  
7 many more people in SNAP or whatever it might be,  
8 that's considered a kudos. That's not the way we  
9 look at it at City Harvest.

11 I also just want to say you know, in  
12 our non-emergency food programs what we have, these  
13 mobile market distributions. Tomorrow there'll be  
14 two in the spirit of the holidays. We have opened  
15 a second one in the South Bronx two weeks ago.  
16 That market is serving over 500 people already. In  
17 Washington Heights that's over 700 people. So you  
18 know, that's just you know, and it's sprinkled  
19 throughout the testimony, but these obvious you  
20 know, increases in the need and supply and demand  
21 for emergency food are underscored. I don't need  
22 to beat that any harder than it already is, and you  
23 know just because City Harvest itself does not do  
24 SNAP outreach and we do support our colleagues...  
25 my colleagues at the table as well as the city

2 efforts to make sure that these cuts are counted in  
3 some way and at least the city can speak out loud  
4 and clear about its opposition to those cuts.

5 Thanks.

6 TRIADA STAMPAS: Good afternoon, Chair  
7 Palma and Council Members Chin and Levin. My name  
8 is Triada Stampas. I'm Senior Director of  
9 Government Relations at Food Bank for New York  
10 City. I want to thank you for the opportunity to  
11 testify this afternoon, and also for your  
12 leadership over the past eight years in... well,  
13 and through this term of the City Council. This  
14 City Council has been a strong advocacy voice for  
15 the needs of low-income food poor New Yorkers. A  
16 number of statements that have come out of this  
17 City Council under your leadership, Chair Palma,  
18 have been used as models and templates for other  
19 local legislatures around the country in combating  
20 cuts to SNAP benefits in particular, both through  
21 you know, sequestration discussions, deficit  
22 reduction discussions and the Farm Bill, and so we  
23 are quite grateful for your advocacy. And I also  
24 want to acknowledge the very warm and productive  
25 relationship that Food Bank has had with the

1  
2 current administration. We work very, very closely  
3 with HRA, for example, both on SNAP outreach, SNAP  
4 nutrition education and the delivery and  
5 distribution of emergency food through EFAP, and we  
6 have had you know, a very positive relationship  
7 throughout in making sure that services are  
8 delivered.

9           With respect to the bill that is before  
10 the committees today, Food Bank supports the  
11 legislation and the intent. We would really like  
12 to see the city produce a metric that is comparable  
13 to the federal food security metrics, as  
14 problematic as that metric might be. There is no  
15 perfect measure of hunger, as Kate said and as Joel  
16 has said, but to give us a way to assess, evaluate,  
17 track over time it's incredibly important and if  
18 it's comparable to federal food security  
19 statistics, then it can be useful for analytics  
20 like Feeding America's Meal Gap statistic and you  
21 know, some of you in the room are familiar with our  
22 analysis using that meal gap analysis of what the  
23 SNAP cuts that have recently come down and what  
24 further SNAP cuts in the Farm Bill might mean in  
25 terms of the meal gap in New York City. You know,

1 the Commissioner commented that at the household  
2 level the SNAP cuts that just took effect this  
3 month are not high. I do want to say that in the  
4 aggregate, it represents a loss of about 76 million  
5 meals over the course of the year and to put that  
6 in perspective for everybody in that room, that is  
7 more than Food Bank for New York City distributes  
8 annually. We are the largest food bank in the  
9 country. We rely on the support of thousands;  
10 literally thousands of donors and volunteers and  
11 supporters and corporate partners and that is more  
12 food taken away by one legislative act than we put  
13 out in a year. So any characterization of these  
14 cuts as small is wrong. And a further perspective  
15 on this is that the average benefit amount has  
16 dropped from the hardly generous \$1.50 per person  
17 per meal to under \$1.40 per person per meal, so you  
18 know, there are ways that this cut can be talked  
19 about so as to minimize it. We've heard that being  
20 talked that way primarily by some of the people  
21 responsible for it, but it is not small. A couple  
22 of points just to kind of create the context. I  
23 wanted to make sure everybody here... and there's  
24 more information in the testimony, but before a  
25

1  
2 single benefit dollar was cut, 42 percent of the  
3 city's SNAP population was turning to a food pantry  
4 or a soup kitchen. There is a real... there was  
5 already a real issue of benefit adequacy and SNAP  
6 dollars have just gotten smaller, so while it is  
7 too soon; it's premature to have system-wide  
8 information from the entire emergency food network,  
9 we do anticipate that with the loss of 76 million  
10 meals, that demand at food pantries and soup  
11 kitchens will go up and anecdotally we have been  
12 hearing that since the very first week of this  
13 month, which is unprecedented. The numbers at food  
14 pantries and soup kitchens typically rise towards  
15 the end of the month when benefits drop. This  
16 month perhaps because of the anxiety of seeing a  
17 lower benefit balance on the EBT card, people have  
18 been turning to their food pantries and soup  
19 kitchens far earlier in the month in far greater  
20 numbers, and that's like I said anecdotal; too soon  
21 to have sort of a system-wide information, but we  
22 are going to be gathering that. Before a single  
23 SNAP benefit dollar was cut, 75 percent of SNAP  
24 recipients who turned to emergency food were out of  
25 their benefits by the third week of the month. 40

1  
2 percent of New York City's veterans were turning to  
3 emergency food, and the number of elderly residents  
4 age 65 and up going to food pantries and soup  
5 kitchens increased 25 percent since the recession  
6 started. I mean we're seeing normal being you  
7 know, redefined in terms of what the hunger picture  
8 is in New York City, and 63 percent of food  
9 pantries and soup kitchens were already reporting  
10 food shortages at some point during the year.

11 I want to acknowledge today the  
12 Governor announced an increase of \$4.5 million to  
13 the state's emergency food funding program, the  
14 Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program  
15 that is direly needed at this particular moment. A  
16 couple of other points: there are a number of  
17 points in my testimony of particular measures that  
18 the city government can take at little or no cost  
19 to address hunger. We do... there are policy  
20 options at the city's disposal and we want the next  
21 administration coming in, but even those sitting  
22 right here right now, to give this a new focus. A  
23 couple of places of particular interest to us and  
24 concern are number one, the participation in the  
25 School Lunch Program and the Summer Meals Program



1  
2 along households that access emergency food that  
3 have school age children is no greater than the  
4 participation in those programs of the population  
5 overall. And here you have 1.4 million people with  
6 obvious and acute food assistance needs that are  
7 not accessing these federal entitlement programs at  
8 any rates greater than the population as a whole.  
9 That's odd, and that strikes us as an area where  
10 there's a lot of potential with targeted outreach  
11 too and also with implementation of things like  
12 universal school meals to really change that  
13 reality.

14           So I think that I will leave at you  
15 know, we are... this is Thanksgiving week and the  
16 holidays are the time when I think there's broad  
17 public awareness that some people have less to put  
18 on their holiday tables than others and some people  
19 maybe have nothing. That awareness I hope this  
20 City Council takes... you take with you throughout  
21 the year. Unfortunately, this a year round  
22 reality, and the support that you have provided to  
23 emergency food programs in particular has been  
24 critical at this point. 60 percent of people who  
25 rely on emergency food consider it their main

2 source of produce and 40 percent consider it their  
3 main source of protein. The city's Emergency Food  
4 Assistance Program is the gold standard and this  
5 Council has consistently funded it and consistently  
6 provided supplementary funding for it because it  
7 provides a year round supply of balanced nutrition,  
8 and so I want to thank you for that, and close  
9 there.

10 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Thank you all for  
11 your testimony. Do you have... Steve. And we've  
12 been joined by Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer from  
13 Queens.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you, Madam  
15 Chair. I just want to thank this panel for the  
16 good work that you do, both in terms of advocacy  
17 and in terms of making sure that food gets to New  
18 Yorkers that need it. I just... I want to  
19 apologize for being late for the hearing. I went  
20 to a couple of senior centers to deliver turkeys,  
21 which I end up doing every year at Thanksgiving  
22 week and I just want to share with you that the  
23 senior center director at the last center that I  
24 went to before I left remarked to me that his  
25 center is up about 10 percent from where it was

2 last year at this time, and this is in the  
3 Greenpoint section of Brooklyn at a senior center  
4 that serves primarily the Polish speaking  
5 population in Greenpoint and you know, about 10  
6 percent, so he sees now like over 150 seniors per  
7 day and they say that it's due to you know, the  
8 squeeze that they're feeling on any number of  
9 levels, whether it be rents that are going up in  
10 the neighborhood or a reduction in the SNAP  
11 benefits, but it's part of what we're living with  
12 across the city and it's in our senior centers and  
13 even though they're funded for only you know, 135  
14 meals a day, they are serving you know, 150 now so.  
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Council Member Van  
17 Bramer?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
19 very much, Madam Chair and I too apologize for  
20 being late, but there are two of my favorite people  
21 in the world on the panel. The third, we will get  
22 to know each other better, but Triada is a  
23 constituent, always making Woodside proud, so I  
24 thank her and Joel, I feel like you almost could be  
25 a constituent because you're in my district so much

1 working with the food pantries and Bishop Taylor  
2 and Sister Tesa and Hour Children and so many  
3 incredibly worthy organizations that do great work,  
4 and we do a food drive every year. We're doing one  
5 right now where we partner with libraries and in  
6 fact, we're picking up all the food this week and  
7 then we'll deliver it to one of our food pantries,  
8 but that's just a drop in the bucket compared to  
9 the need. And Tirada, I just wanted to take you up  
10 on your offer because the... what you were talking  
11 about in terms of advocacy and promoting and  
12 discrepancy where it's crazy that the rates of use,  
13 whether it's school meals or other things are the  
14 same. That's just absolutely got to change, so  
15 maybe we can set up a meeting and we can talk about  
16 that and you and your organization can direct me so  
17 that we can do that together, at least in our neck  
18 of the woods and so we can make a dent, but Joel  
19 and I were out at Hour Children's Food Pantry a few  
20 weeks ago and I think we'll be together at  
21 Queensbridge soon. But I just want to thank you  
22 all for the great work that you do, and what's  
23 happened in Congress is just unforgiveable and  
24

2 unconscionable and I thank you for all the work  
3 that you do.

4 TRIADA STAMPAS: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Thank you. I have  
6 a quick question. Joel, I want to thank you for  
7 the recommendations that you made and can add to  
8 Intro 1194. I believe that this... you know, I  
9 feel strongly about this bill and I believe that it  
10 can be a good piece of legislation to start closing  
11 the food gap that exists right here in our city,  
12 but I'm also cognizant of not wanting to put a  
13 burden on the new administration having to  
14 implement a piece of legislation that will cost us  
15 so much more and will take away from other areas in  
16 the social service part of the administration,  
17 right? So can you also mention being that the  
18 federal government already has or does this kind of  
19 work, so I want to ask do you believe that in  
20 implementing this bill, the city can actually use  
21 all the information that the federal government  
22 puts together to get us to figure out what the  
23 number is here locally for us and...

24 KATE MACKENZIE: I think one... I guess  
25 the word of caution would be more on the recipient

1  
2 end. You know, we need to be mindful of the fact  
3 that these are... the methodology that the federal  
4 government uses are individual surveys. I don't  
5 know; it's probably in their... I would imagine  
6 it's about 15 minutes per survey. It could be  
7 longer or it could be less. That's a lot to ask of  
8 yes, the researchers, but more so on the receiving  
9 end to the person who's being interviewed, and so I  
10 would think you know, I offered perhaps one other  
11 methodology. I'm sure there are many others, but  
12 something that wouldn't be as time consuming on  
13 both ends to arrive at a number of food insecurity  
14 and all of the factors that go into it is something  
15 that I would want to encourage you to think about  
16 when you're making the final recommendation, but  
17 you know too I think all of our points having the  
18 figure and the picture that that figure would talk  
19 about is much needed in the city.

20 JOEL BERG: So I reinforce the main  
21 point. I think it's absolutely important the city  
22 report on some number and they should own the  
23 numbers. I agree with the Mayor's oft stated  
24 premise if you can't measure you can't manage, and  
25 have pointed out the inconsistency; that when it

1 comes to hunger and poverty and homelessness data,  
2 they sort of all of a sudden any data that exists  
3 that contradicts our preconceived notions, then  
4 that's wrong or let's ignore it or not report it et  
5 cetera and you know, the whole reason we're having  
6 this hearing is because they asked for this to be  
7 taken out of the original Food Metrics Bill. I'll  
8 give you another you know, example. Every year,  
9 the U.S. Conference of Mayors does an annual study  
10 on hunger and homelessness since Mayor Bloomberg's  
11 been Mayor of the City of New York and he's refused  
12 to participate, one of the few big cities that's  
13 refused to participate. When Mayor Bloomberg ran  
14 for re-election he said he would and they didn't,  
15 and so I just think with a slight tweak to the  
16 language it could be clear that they have to report  
17 on something they find credible and the Council  
18 finds credible, but they could use a combination of  
19 existing federal resources you know, Feeding  
20 America Study, the Conference of Mayors Study and  
21 find something credible without spending you know,  
22 a million dollars a thing. One of the things we  
23 propose, and we have a comprehensive plan that some  
24 of you already signed onto called Food Security New  
25

1  
2 York City 2018, a comprehensive food plan for the  
3 city, and I know my colleagues have other plans as  
4 well. And so one of the things we proposed is a  
5 food zone that we try a comprehensive series of  
6 interventions in a small concentrated part of the  
7 city. Everything that the Department of Health  
8 might want to do on obesity prevention from  
9 nutrition to education to more exercise; everything  
10 we want to do on hunger and again, that we would  
11 have a small mechanism for measuring food  
12 insecurity at that level, and that would collect  
13 some extra data collection and that might be  
14 private money or that might be city money. That'd  
15 be maybe a combination of the two and I think at a  
16 smaller level we could experiment on some more  
17 precise measures for food insecurity.

18 TRIADA STAMPAS: I would say as long as  
19 you know, you get the right experts in the room to  
20 kind of come up with a Metric. Nothing is going to  
21 be perfect. We can all spend the next several  
22 years quibbling over the imperfections, but just  
23 having that number to reinforce the points that my  
24 colleagues here have made, having that number will  
25 have tremendous value.



2 JOEL BERG: And sticking to it even if  
3 it looks bad.

4 TRIADA STAMPAS: Yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Oh, yeah and thank  
6 you so much for your testimony and I look forward  
7 to continuing to work on figuring out what the  
8 correct language for this bill can be that can help  
9 us get through what those numbers are for the City  
10 of New York. Thank you.

11 [crosstalk]

12 JOEL BERG: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Our next panel is  
14 Stephanie Gendell from Citizens Committee for  
15 Children; Laurie McNeil, Urban Justice Center and  
16 Ellen Vollinger from FRAC, right, Food Research and  
17 Action Center. Ellen, I hope I said your last name  
18 correct.

19 ELLEN VOLLINGER: Vollinger. It's  
20 okay.

21 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Vollinger, okay.  
22 Thank you.

23 [Pause]

24 ELLEN VOLLINGER: If you'd like us to  
25 start...

2 [crosstalk]

3 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Yes.

4 [crosstalk]

5 ELLEN VOLLINGER: We'll go ahead.

6 [crosstalk]

7 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: You can, you can.

8 ELLEN VOLLINGER: I'm Ellen Vollinger.

9 I'm from the food Research and Action Center in  
10 Washington, D.C. We're a national organization  
11 that works on these issues, and we're delighted to  
12 be here. We're delighted that you're focusing on  
13 this issue. It's a terrible problem, but your  
14 leadership's so important and so Chairperson Palma  
15 and the other council people, thank you so much for  
16 having us. I'm going to just summarize the  
17 testimony that's being handed out, but my  
18 organization is familiar with the fact that if  
19 you're going to talk about addressing hunger, you  
20 do have to measure it and long before I was with  
21 the organization, and this is not in the testimony,  
22 in the 1980s, there was a debate in the federal  
23 government about whether or not hunger even existed  
24 because it wasn't being measured and many of  
25 researchers worked with academicians and others and

1  
2 piloted some ways of getting at the problem and I'm  
3 pleased that the USDA does now do a survey with the  
4 Census Department. In addition to that, there are  
5 other ways of looking at food hardship in the  
6 country. One of the surveys that I'm pointing you  
7 to is the Gallup Survey, a very respected polling  
8 organization that has a very large sample size and  
9 when they ask whether or not people have had  
10 difficulty affording food for themselves and their  
11 families in the prior months, they get a very  
12 strong response that is very similar to the outcome  
13 of the USDA Census measure. I say that not because  
14 they're identical or because one should substitute  
15 for the other, but because they complement each  
16 other and I think it gives one some confidence when  
17 those two measures come in with a range that's very  
18 similar. Your proposed legislation seeks to assess  
19 and track food insecurity levels for New York City  
20 and the areas within it, and as has already been  
21 discussed, the federal data has some shortcomings  
22 with respect to looking at areas below the state  
23 level. One of the advantages of the Gallup data,  
24 because of the sample size, is it's given FRAC  
25 enough data to be able to estimate food hardship

1  
2 for not only a state, but also metropolitan areas  
3 and congressional districts and here in New York  
4 City, unfortunately, you have the distinction of  
5 having the congressional district with the highest  
6 food hardship in the country; that's Congressional  
7 District number 16, and I've given you in the  
8 testimony links to these various reports. But as t  
9 whether or not a survey would be something that you  
10 would want to undertake, I certainly would leave  
11 that to you and the others, but I would point out  
12 that in California, they also were interested in  
13 getting down to the county and sub-county levels  
14 with respect to food insecurity and they've added  
15 questions to what's called the California Health  
16 Survey that's conducted by the UCLA Center for  
17 Health Policy Research. It asks questions that are  
18 similar to the kind of approach in the USDA Census  
19 Model. I'm not an expert on that survey, but I  
20 offer you links to the information because it does  
21 show that it is possible; certainly in Los Angeles,  
22 they now have an estimate about food hardship or  
23 food insecurity in Los Angeles and within areas  
24 that are below the county level and we do think, as  
25 has been pointed out by the previous panel, it

1  
2 would be very helpful for outreach efforts and  
3 targeting of resources to know not only what is  
4 food insecurity in New York, what is it New York  
5 City, but what is it in the boroughs and what is it  
6 in the various neighborhoods, and we do think that  
7 that would help you.

8 I will just end by saying that we've  
9 got some other areas that we hope that you will  
10 continue to focus on, including getting SNAP to  
11 more people and getting the benefits in a higher  
12 amount. We know that for many years New York  
13 City's had a very high jobless problem and yet,  
14 never had the advantage as other areas across the  
15 country have of not cutting off jobless people from  
16 benefits even though there's a high jobless rate,  
17 and we hope the next administration would take a  
18 look at getting authority from the federal  
19 government and the state not to cut people off when  
20 there's high unemployment. We'd also like to see  
21 more done with school breakfast, particularly in  
22 the classroom with after-school programs and summer  
23 nutrition, but finally, we have to thank you for  
24 the leadership that you have shown in standing up  
25 on the SNAP cuts. I was delighted to hear the

2 Chairperson start off her remarks by talking about  
3 the damage of the November cuts and also what could  
4 be coming from the federal government. We have a  
5 website. We've had the Council's resolutions and  
6 letters up there. They are, in fact, models for  
7 other areas of the country. They've been inspiring  
8 to all of us who are trying to hold the line  
9 against the cuts in Congress, and we would  
10 encourage you, please, you can't ever speak out  
11 often enough for Congress. They need to hear to  
12 over and over, so we'd encourage you to keep  
13 freshening that up and again, thank you for this  
14 hearing and thank you for including us.

15 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Thank you.

16 LORI MCNEIL: Good afternoon. My name  
17 is Lori McNeil. I'm from the Urban Justice Center  
18 and I'm the Director of Research and Policy, and  
19 thank you for this opportunity to speak about  
20 hunger gaps and hunger hardships in New York City.  
21 So part of our work at the Safety Net Project,  
22 which is one of 11 projects at the Urban Justice  
23 Center, includes Food Stamp outreach efforts and we  
24 host two Food Stamp outreach clinics in the Bronx  
25 at community health centers. One is in Tremont and

2 one is in Fordham, so the health centers are  
3 located in Congressional District 16, which my  
4 colleague referred to earlier, which is, in fact,  
5 the highest rate of food hardship in the entire  
6 United States. So based on our outreach work in CD  
7 16 and research examining food hardship across the  
8 nation, we found that hunger is not indiscriminate,  
9 but rather it's uniquely shaped by geography, which  
10 in turn, is shaped by special circumstances such as  
11 disability. Our conclusion after looking at our  
12 data, which examined 312 cases that we provided  
13 advocacy services for between the months of March  
14 and June of this year, is that the characteristics  
15 in Community District 16 that were most evident  
16 were income originating from SSI or SSD, mixed  
17 citizenship families, single parent or caretaker  
18 families and working households or households with  
19 what we call earned income. So it's important for  
20 us to note and to understand as we're looking at  
21 food interventions and also as we're looking at the  
22 Bill 1194, is that the characteristics that I  
23 referred to are often signifiers of households that  
24 aren't able to individually fill their own... that  
25 hunger gap within their households. So for

1  
2 example, working disabled or single parent  
3 households may not be able to access food pantries,  
4 even if the pantries have the capacity to meet  
5 their needs. Mixed citizenship households, for  
6 example, may not have access to other benefits such  
7 as public assistance, cash assistance and  
8 disability benefits. So as our city is exploring  
9 hunger interventions and also really evaluating the  
10 merits of the data collection under 1194, we really  
11 need to think about those unique pockets of hunger  
12 in New York City and how we can both address that  
13 need and measure that need. Thank you very much  
14 for this opportunity to testify.

15                   STEPHANIE GENDELL: Good afternoon. My  
16 name is Stephanie Gendell. I'm the Associate  
17 Executive Director for policy and Government  
18 Relations at Citizens' Committee for Children. I  
19 wanted to thank the Council for your longstanding  
20 commitment to hunger and food insecurity issues.  
21 Holding this annual hunger hearing every November  
22 before most New Yorkers fill their tables with lots  
23 of food is a great reminder of all the families who  
24 are really struggling and a reminder that we need  
25 to work on these issues throughout the year. As



2 you know, food insecurity and hunger take a toll on  
3 children and their families. Poor nutrition can  
4 impact children's academic outcomes, can lead to  
5 illnesses, increase school absences and a poor diet  
6 can have long-term health consequences such as  
7 obesity and diabetes. We appreciate the  
8 Introduction 1194 and support it. We do have some  
9 of the similar concerns that have been raised and  
10 some ideas about how to do it in a way where we are  
11 comfortable with the definition and also where it's  
12 not overly costly and burdensome on the city. Many  
13 of those ideas have already been discussed, but a  
14 couple other ones are that the current food metrics  
15 includes those receiving SNAP who are over 65, but  
16 does not have the entirety of those receiving or  
17 children SNAP benefits through their family, as  
18 well as other things that we think would... data  
19 that the city already has that would address...  
20 that you could use to sort of capture food  
21 insecurity measures like number of children  
22 receiving free and reduced price lunch, the number  
23 participating in the programs and the amount of  
24 Summer Meals Program et cetera, as well and we also  
25 support all the efforts of our colleagues up here

2 and who were here before who also do measures of  
3 food insecurity and hunger and wonder if there's a  
4 way to capture some of the data that they're  
5 collecting. And then lastly, the Department of  
6 Health and Mental Hygiene already does a survey, a  
7 community health survey that they administer, and  
8 wonder if maybe there's a way to get some of these  
9 questions into the survey they're already  
10 administering as opposed to starting a new survey  
11 and that could be less costly. Our other  
12 recommendations in the testimony are really again,  
13 about we can try to improve on where we are, many  
14 of which have been mentioned already in terms of  
15 ensuring more people who are eligible for SNAP are  
16 receiving SNAP. One of the things I wanted to  
17 mention and highlight is that we were really  
18 grateful for all of the funds that were baselined  
19 this past week, and most of the items that CCC has  
20 advocated for were there, but one of the few that  
21 we didn't see was the funding for EBT at Farmers  
22 Markets, and we have long supported that and we're  
23 really disappointed to see it missing from the list  
24 of items that were not baselined and we hope that  
25 working with the next administration and the

2 Council we can get that baselined into the budget  
3 and actually expand it so that all Farmers Markets  
4 have access to EBT. As has been discussed by  
5 others, we obviously from Citizens' Committee for  
6 children support increasing school meal options and  
7 participation and expanding breakfast in the  
8 classroom to all schools, as well as the universal  
9 school meals and increasing the take up on Summer  
10 Meals. And we also include in the testimony some  
11 ideas about expanding access to healthy and  
12 affordable food such as expanding and maintaining  
13 Green Carts and FRESH and then also thinking about  
14 ways... a lot of those ideas are bringing food to  
15 communities, but there are also ways to bring  
16 communities to food and thinking about the expanded  
17 use of bus services, school bus service at NYCHA  
18 that often brings... or not often, but can bring  
19 seniors to food; thinking about expanding that to  
20 parents with young children who also are living in  
21 those facilities and could use transportation since  
22 it's hard to carry young children and groceries  
23 back to your home. Thank you for all of your  
24 efforts and for this opportunity to testify.

2 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Thank you all for  
3 your testimony and as always, I welcome the  
4 recommendations and you know, this is part of when  
5 we want to introduce a bill, just hearing from the  
6 advocates and making sure that we capture as much  
7 as you know, the information that we need and that  
8 the recommendations from the advocates allow us to  
9 put a piece of legislation together that's going to  
10 help us reach the goals and create the intent of  
11 the bill to make sure that New Yorkers are moving  
12 forward. So thank you all and I look forward to  
13 continuing to work with you.

14 STEPHANIE GENDELL: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Our next and last  
16 panel is Agnes Molnar from Community Food Advocates  
17 and Janet Poppendike...

18 JANET POPPENDIECK: Poppendieck.

19 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Poppendieck, New  
20 York City Food Policy Center at Hunter College.

21 [Pause]

22 AGNES MOLNAR: Good afternoon and thank  
23 you very much for this opportunity.

24 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Can you just push  
25 the button and...

2 AGNES MOLNAR: Is it on?

3 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Yes.

4 AGNES MOLNAR: Okay, I'm really happy  
5 to be here and... it was on. [laughter] Maybe I'm  
6 too short. I'm Agnes Molnar from Community Food  
7 Advocates and I've been an advocate for child  
8 nutrition programs for 35 years in this city and  
9 I'm really happy to be sitting here with Jan  
10 Poppendieck, who has been the chairperson of our  
11 former organization and currently is the vice chair  
12 of Community Food Advocates. You're talking about  
13 hunger and we have a very simple solution, or  
14 rather part of a solution. Children who are hungry  
15 in this city don't have to be hungry. We have  
16 800,000 New York City public school children who do  
17 not eat breakfast in school and we have 400,000 who  
18 do not eat lunch in school and we also know this is  
19 a very poor population. 75 percent of our public  
20 school children are eligible for free and reduced  
21 priced meals and today there's no longer a reduced  
22 price category. It's free if you meet that  
23 eligibility. And our organization... some of our  
24 colleagues have mentioned this campaign before, but  
25 it is called the Lunch for Learning Campaign that

1 we started because we would like to attack the  
2 attitude about this program and that is the reason  
3 that children don't participate. We need to change  
4 that in order to deal and address with childhood  
5 hunger, and it's long past the time to do that. So  
6 what we are looking for is a universal lunch  
7 program where no one is identified by income.  
8 Everybody in school gets a lunch and there's no  
9 segregation and no stigma attached to it. I mean I  
10 think school food has tried very hard to change the  
11 meals to make them nutritious; to make them  
12 attractive. I know this is not your area at all,  
13 but we deal with education people as well. They  
14 are concerned and how do we get these children to  
15 eat and that would make a major dent in hunger.  
16 And people have mentioned Summer Meals. That only  
17 reaches 15 percent of our New York City children,  
18 and that's a free program, no questions asked.  
19 Again, it's the stigma; it's not enough sites. We  
20 need to do something about that. And the other  
21 thing about child nutrition programs is you don't  
22 have to prove citizenship. Everybody is eligible  
23 regardless of their residency and that's a big  
24 thing for some of these families and why they don't  
25

1 participate is really criminal. So we're here to  
2 ask your support for Lunch for Learning. We have  
3 figured out it would cost the city \$20 million more  
4 to feed everybody free lunch and we're talking  
5 about a \$22 billion education budget. We think we  
6 can find the money for that. It really is  
7 something the city can afford. So we're asking for  
8 your support as well for Lunch for Learning. Thank  
9 you very much.

11                   JANET POPPENDIECK: Okay, well, I too  
12 am happy to be here and congratulate the City  
13 Council on this tradition of reviewing the hunger  
14 issue in New York City at this time of the year  
15 when food is on all of our minds. I'm here on  
16 behalf of the New York City Food Policy Center at  
17 Hunter College and so this is a chance for me to  
18 express my gratitude to the City Council, which was  
19 our first and so far major funder and we are  
20 grateful. The Center works with policymakers,  
21 community organizations, advocates and the public  
22 to create healthier more sustainable food  
23 environments and to use food to promote community  
24 and economic development. This is a pivotal moment  
25 in our history in New York. The recent SNAP cuts

2 have made life even more difficult for 1.9 million  
3 New Yorkers who rely on SNAP and they will harm  
4 many more New Yorkers as the cuts trickle through  
5 our economy in terms of labor hours, work hours for  
6 people in food retail, people driving trucks for  
7 delivery, people working in warehouses. The food  
8 economy is sinful to the economy of New York City  
9 and when you take that much money out of it, you're  
10 going to have cuts that affect people all across  
11 the board. I want to thank you for the work that  
12 you've done in terms of opposing these cuts and  
13 opposing the cuts that are now being considered by  
14 the House and Senate Committees. I want to  
15 reinforce what Ellen Vollinger said about your  
16 leadership being important. Reach out to your  
17 colleagues in other cities. Let's get the  
18 municipal voice even louder. You know, we're all  
19 used to it now; we're reading about politicians  
20 being arrested. How about we see some politicians  
21 being arrested sitting in the U.S. Capitol in the  
22 Agriculture Committees because they really are  
23 doing a huge disservice to our cities and our  
24 people. But this is also a pivotal time in our  
25 history because of a change in the food world; the



1  
2 rise of a vibrant food movement and the growing  
3 awareness. You've been talking about the food  
4 metrics and I think they have made a difference in  
5 terms of awareness within government and among non-  
6 profits in the city of the centrality of food, and  
7 so I asked Agnes if I could go last or second  
8 because I want to shift the conversation a little  
9 bit to the opportunities that are inherent in this  
10 time in our history with a new administration  
11 coming in; as I say, this really vibrant food  
12 movement rising and growing and some changes in  
13 your own body.

14           So you probably all heard John Lennon  
15 say, "Imagine there's no hunger," so do a little  
16 imagining with me. Imagine restoring and  
17 revitalizing our public market spaces like La  
18 Marqueta, which is very close to our School of  
19 Public Health in East Harlem, as centers for  
20 healthy fruits and vegetables, healthy diets and  
21 centers that would integrate SNAP outreach, health  
22 benefits, screenings for diet-related diseases and  
23 increase the accessibility of healthy food.  
24 Imagine tapping the full potential of the school  
25 food programs to fight hunger by moving to

2 universal free school lunches by removing the  
3 stigma that's still attaches the school food and  
4 generating jobs, and I always have to make this  
5 point and I'm glad that the Committee on Women's  
6 Issues is involved here. School food jobs are jobs  
7 on the School Calendar. These are jobs that are  
8 good for people who are trying to be the  
9 breadwinner and the homemaker or the parent at the  
10 same time. These are good jobs for people who are  
11 trying to raise children in our city because  
12 they're on the School Calendar. If we move to  
13 universal free school meals; if we implement  
14 breakfast in the classroom and we increase the  
15 number of children eating, we increase the jobs in  
16 that system. Imagine using those school cafeterias  
17 and kitchens in the evening hours as public family  
18 dining rooms. These are places where parents and  
19 grandparents and children could share a healthy  
20 meal; where local poets could read their work and  
21 aspiring musicians and film makers; where City  
22 Council Members could mingle with their  
23 constituents. Let's have some non-profit  
24 alternatives to the fast food option that so many  
25 low-income families rely on. Since so many New

2 York City agencies and institutions prepare and  
3 serve meals; at least 270 million meals a year are  
4 served under public auspices in New York and that's  
5 before we get Lunch for Learning and universal free  
6 and expand those numbers, we need to expand our  
7 food processing capacity in New York. In  
8 Burlington, Vermont, the school system is the major  
9 customer for a bean processing plant, okay, which  
10 makes a black bean crumble that they use to great  
11 advantage toward the nutritional profile of their  
12 school food, but then has enabled that industry to  
13 get started and hire people and employ people and  
14 make their great product available to other  
15 institutions. We have the capacity here in New  
16 York. We're feeding so many meals. We could be  
17 stimulating vibrant industries. Finally, I'd like  
18 to stick in the idea that we would like to convert  
19 our food service at CUNY from a corporate service  
20 where the profits go in some cases off to the U.K.  
21 or down to North Carolina or Ohio to a self-  
22 operated system, which would increase the training  
23 opportunities and work opportunities for our  
24 students and our ability to prioritize healthy  
25 food.

2           So there are some more ideas in here,  
3 but I think my time is probably expended and I  
4 didn't address your question about the food metric,  
5 so I just want to join my colleagues in saying it's  
6 absolutely important to get a food metric into the  
7 Food Metrics Report that addresses the hunger  
8 issue. I would definitely think twice before I  
9 tried to replicate the Household Food Security  
10 Survey on the local level because you need such a  
11 large sample size in order to be able to do any of  
12 the cross tabulations to have enough to fill the  
13 cells that I think that it's more than we need to  
14 spend because as several of my colleagues have  
15 pointed out, there are cheaper ways to get to some  
16 of the information we need. The FRAC's Gallup  
17 Survey is a much briefer inquiry that really relies  
18 on just a question or two, and that might be a  
19 alternative you'd want to look at.

20           CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Thank you both for  
21 your testimony. I really appreciate you taking the  
22 time coming down and sharing your ideas with us. I  
23 would like to conclude today's hearing. Oh, sorry.  
24 Sure.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you, Madam  
3 Chair. I just want to thank this panel as well,  
4 and one thing that I think we need to look at and  
5 figure out a way to address with the administration  
6 that's coming in, who I think has an appetite; no  
7 pun intended; for universal lunch, is how... I've  
8 heard some concerns not from them, but from others  
9 that I won't say who they are, but that are  
10 important to... an important partner in this  
11 endeavor about how to... they use school lunch as a  
12 way to collect data on Title I, and so and kind of  
13 just on a practical level I think that they've  
14 gotten used to doing that and they haven't I think  
15 figured out another way to collect the data that  
16 they think is necessary to collect, and which helps  
17 with federal funds and state funds going to schools  
18 that need them and you know, I think that they  
19 think a way in which they can collect that data is  
20 through the incentive of enrolling in free lunch.  
21 And so I think that we need to kind of look at that  
22 issue as we're looking towards expanding to  
23 universal lunch. I think that there's obviously a  
24 way to figure it out and as a way to achieve the  
25 goals that we need to achieve, but that's one thing

2 that it's been a concern that's been voiced to me  
3 and I think that we can work collaboratively to  
4 address it.

5 CHAIRPERSON PALMA: Thank you, Council  
6 Member Levin and Council Member Chin for hanging  
7 out 'til the end of the hearing. I would like to  
8 conclude today's hearing by saying thank you to all  
9 who not only attended today's hearing, but also  
10 worked to make sure that the information we had was  
11 productive in moving the hearing along and our  
12 Sergeant-at-Arms for taking care of the room for us  
13 today. You know, the holiday season is upon us and  
14 as it was mentioned before, it's a time of year  
15 where hunger's really highlighted and I just want  
16 to ask everyone while we're celebrating with our  
17 families to just say a special prayer and keep you  
18 know, those who are less fortunate than us in their  
19 thoughts and making sure that you know, we're also  
20 not only thinking about this issue during the  
21 holidays, but all throughout the year and hunger's  
22 not a holiday issue. It's an everyday real fact of  
23 life for people living in our city and in our  
24 nation and we need to stay committed to combating  
25 this in a real way throughout all levels of

2 government, and I believe that you know, that  
3 starts with us. You know, we need to be the change  
4 we want to see in this world, so I will continue to  
5 make sure that moving forward this Council  
6 continues to bring awareness and continue to make  
7 sure that we find resources in partnership with the  
8 administration to continue our fight against  
9 hunger. Thank you so much and I'll conclude  
10 today's hearing of the Women's Committee, General  
11 Welfare and the Health Committee.

12 [gavel]

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

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. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.



Date: \_\_\_\_\_12/09/2013\_\_\_\_\_