Governor Cuomo Taps Food Bank to Helm Anti-Hunger Task Force

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By Alyssa Herman

For 30 years, Food Bank's mission has been to end hunger in our great city. But we can't accomplish this Herculean feat alone. This work requires the collaboration of many partners--an approach that Food Bank has long embraced. Over the course of the past three decades a long list of partners and supporters have joined us in helping struggling New Yorkers keep food on the table.

Now our governor, Andrew Cuomo, is using the same strategy with the creation of the New York State Anti-Hunger Task Force, which brings experts, officials and advocates to the same table. His reasoning is powerfully simple: We can do more by working together than we can by working individually. Collaboration of this type, he explained, "can enhance the effectiveness of our fight against hunger by better coordinating the significant public and private resources already dedicated to this important issue."

Governor Cuomo is making sure that Food Bank For New York City has a seat--and a leading voice--at the table by appointing our President and CEO, Margarette Purvis, to Chair the Task Force.

The launch of the Task Force couldn't come at a more critical time: 2.5 million New Yorkers are having a hard time affording food for themselves and their families, and 1 in 5 children in New York City rely on emergency food providers to eat. It is appalling that a city of such wealth has so many people living in poverty, struggling to afford a basic necessity of life.

As Margarette put it when the announcement of her appointment was made, "Since the Great Recession, hunger has reached unprecedented levels in our state and city. Recent cuts to the vital food resources that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) provides low-income New Yorkers make this a time of particularly urgent need. In fact, nearly 1 in 4 New Yorkers who are eligible for food stamps do not receive them. The creation of the Task Force will serve to strengthen New York's response to hunger and bolster our safety net."

I couldn't agree more. Ending hunger means much more than simply providing emergency food to people in need. It also means finding ways to shore up the resources that help keep people off food lines in the first place. It means developing income-based strategies that will help lift people out of poverty. The Task Force will tackle these issues and more as it works to achieve three specific goals: maximize Federal funds for the state's anti-hunger efforts by increasing participation in SNAP and universal school meals; increase outreach through innovative and strategic public/private partnerships; and better leverage New York farms to improve access to healthy food, create jobs and stimulate the local economy.

A broad array of experts will join Margarette in this undertaking, including anti-hunger advocates, service providers, hunger and nutrition experts, representatives of the agriculture industry, local government and education officials, representatives of the nonprofit and private sectors, and members of Governor Cuomo's cabinet. I'm confident that by working together, Margarette and

these leaders will come up with viable solutions to help alleviate hunger in our city and our state.

For more details about the launch of the Anti-Hunger Task Force, please click here.

Alyssa Herman is the Chief Development Officer at Food Bank For New York City.