# NYC Needs a Living Wage

Posted At : March 23, 2011 1:28 PM | Posted By : Food Bank Staff
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*by Ashley Goforth*

Food Bank For New York City would like to announce its endorsement of the ”Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act.” As our supporters know, the Food Bank works to educate members of the public and government officials at the city, state and federal levels to enlist their support in combating food poverty. To better understand the idea of a living wage and the Food Bank’s role in this effort, we asked Triada Stampas, Director of Governmental Relations & Public Education, to elaborate more on the campaign and the Food Bank’s mission to end food poverty.

What is a living wage? A living wage is the hourly wage rate necessary for a person to afford basic needs, like housing, food and health care. Because cost of living varies from place to place, the amount that would constitute a living wage in one city or area might be higher or lower than in another. In New York City, existing legislation has already defined the local living wage as $10/hour with benefits or $11.50/hour without benefits.

**What is Living Wage NYC?**

Living Wage NYC is a coalition of organizations that are working toward a living wage for all New Yorkers..

**What is the Living Wage NYC proposing?**

The campaign’s big push right now, which the Food Bank has endorsed, is for passage of the “Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act” (Int. 251-2010). The bill would require developers and major employers who receive government subsidies for economic development projects to guarantee that the jobs created by those projects will pay a living wage.

**Why is the Food Bank involved?**

The Food Bank strives every day not only to provide food to the 1.4 million New Yorkers who rely on our network of approximately 1,000 community-based member programs, but to tackle the financial, educational and public policy issues that perpetuate hunger and food poverty. Right now, New York City’s unemployment rate is still almost double what it was at the start of the recession, and the current minimum wage ($7.25/hr) is well below a living wage. So too many New Yorkers simply don’t have the resources to provide sufficient food for themselves and their families on a regular basis – in fact, our research shows 3 million New York City residents had difficulty affording food over the past year. Ensuring that those employers who receive city subsidies in turn provide a living wage to their employees is a significant step in the right direction – and if we are going to fulfill our mission of ending hunger in New York City, supporting work to secure the dignity and independence of a living wage for more New Yorkers is one of the most important things we can do.