



**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF  
FOOD BANK FOR NEW YORK CITY**

New York City Council Committee on General Welfare  
Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget Hearing  
March 17, 2026

Thank you, Chair Hudson and Members of the General Welfare Committee. My name is Nicole Hunt and I am proud to serve as Director of Public Policy and Advocacy at Food Bank For New York City (Food Bank). I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Food Bank and our network of more than 800 soup kitchens, food pantries, and campus partners across all five boroughs in strong support of robust FY27 funding for food security programs.

Founded in 1983, Food Bank is the city's largest hunger-relief organization. To date, we have delivered over 1.6 billion meals to New Yorkers in need. In this past fiscal year alone, we have distributed more than 103 million pounds of food, equivalent to 86 million meals, with half of all food distributed consisting of fresh produce and lean protein. Our Member Network reaches all 51 NYC Council Districts and nearly every zip code in New York City.

We are here today because New York City must act in the face of compounding threats to food security.

**I. The Scale of Need in New York City**

New York City's affordability crisis is not easing; it is deepening. According to Feeding America's most recent Map the Meal Gap study, more than 1 in 6 New Yorkers are food insecure, a sharp increase from pre-pandemic levels. The most recent NYC True Cost of Living Report finds that 50% of NYC families, or nearly 1.3 million households, lack sufficient resources to meet basic needs, and 63% of households with children are income inadequate.

Across our network, pantries and soup kitchens report demand up to 80% higher than before the pandemic, especially among families with children. Food pantry visits across the city reached 47 million in FY25, an 84–87% increase over 2019 levels. That is 25 million more visits than just six years ago. In communities like the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn, where food insecurity rates already exceed 25%, the situation is particularly severe. Food insecurity in New York City is disproportionately concentrated among Black and Latino households, woman-headed households, immigrants, and people with disabilities. Veterans, older adults, families with children, and working New Yorkers are being forced to choose between food, rent, and healthcare. These are our neighbors.

One of our volunteers, a senior in the Bronx, recently shared her experience of dealing with the loss of food assistance during the 2025 shutdown. "When SNAP benefits weren't coming, I didn't know what I



would do. I would have to choose between getting the shot in my knee that lets me walk without assistance and buying groceries. I have worked all my life. I shouldn't have to make that choice." Investing in food security is an investment in the dignity of New Yorkers all over the city.

## **II. Federal Cuts Are Making Hunger Worse**

At precisely the moment New York City's food assistance infrastructure is most strained, Washington is stepping back. The "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" (H.R.1) slashes \$186 billion from SNAP, putting more than 408 million meals at risk for New Yorkers over the next decade. New York State could lose more than \$1.2 billion annually in SNAP funding when the bill is fully implemented.

Even with strong state and city mitigation efforts, an estimated 180,000 New York City residents will lose SNAP eligibility under H.R.1, forcing even more families to rely on community pantries and soup kitchens. Beginning in October 2026, New York City faces over \$110 million annually in lost SNAP administrative funding, threatening the City's capacity to process applications and connect eligible New Yorkers to benefits.

The impact on our network is already being felt. According to a recent NYC food consortium survey, 92% of pantry leaders report higher demand, and 83% report that they are already experiencing the effects of federal cuts. The city's food assistance network was never designed and does not have the resources to replace federal nutrition programs, yet that is increasingly what is being asked of it.

## **III. Our Asks: FY27 Budget Priorities**

We respectfully urge the Council to champion the following investments in the FY27 budget:

### **1. \$100 Million in Baseline Funding for Community Food Connection**

Community Food Connection (CFC) is New York City's primary baseline investment in direct community food assistance, administered by DSS/HRA. CFC supplies nutritious, fresh food to 570 food programs across all five boroughs and provides direct access to wholesale food, giving pantries of all sizes the flexibility to meet community needs and respond quickly to emergencies.

The value of this investment is proven. During the 2025 federal shutdown, New York City's additional CFC investment of approximately \$15 million was deployed immediately and effectively by participating agencies. Every dollar invested in CFC now protects New York City from far greater long-term costs, in healthcare, shelter, and education, associated with entrenched food insecurity. Without baseline growth in CFC, providers cannot rely on this critical resource, and many may be forced to reduce the amount of food they distribute, the number of families they serve, or the frequency of distributions.

### **2. Support SNAP Administration and the HRA Workforce**



SNAP remains the most powerful anti-hunger tool available, and every dollar of SNAP generates approximately \$1.50 in local economic activity. Federal cuts threaten New York City's budget for SNAP administration, including application processing and outreach to underenrolled populations such as seniors and households facing language barriers.

Application backlogs and processing errors directly cause eligible families to go unenrolled. The Council should invest support in non-profit SNAP outreach and assistance while protecting funding for the HRA workforce to ensure timely, accurate processing and robust outreach. Every 1% improvement in participation represents tens of thousands of additional households accessing critical benefits.

Recently, one of our SNAP Benefits Specialists received a call from a very distraught client, a 93-year-old man whose SNAP case was closed without any explanation. He lives alone, has no family for support, and relies on his SNAP benefits to pay for food. He was upset and felt helpless. Our staff went to work advocating through the Mediation Model, which Food Bank helps administer in partnership with HRA. We were able to get his case reinstated, and he received retroactive benefits. On top of that, our staff assisted him in updating his application and determined he was eligible for the maximum benefit of \$292 per month. Because he is a senior, he will maintain enrollment in SNAP for at least 2 years, meaning our Benefits Specialist's work connected this NYC senior to over \$7,000 in food benefits.

### **3. Invest in Key City Council Food Initiatives: Food Pantries, Food Access and Benefits, and Feeding Our Communities**

City Council discretionary funding through these initiatives provides critical support for the community-based organizations standing on the front lines of the fight against hunger. These investments support many non-profits across the city, fill gaps, strengthen local capacity, and ensure that food assistance reaches the most vulnerable New Yorkers in every district and zip code.

Food Bank relies on support from these initiatives to provide pantry services at 25 K-12 schools, SNAP outreach and assistance, and targeted efforts to strengthen food security in high-need communities

One of our school pantry partners in Brownsville recently shared how much families look forward to the weekly pantry distributions, saying "Our parents have been so grateful for our school pantry. We service many families who do not qualify for SNAP benefits. The pantry provides meals to these households in need."

### **4. Fund Programs That Promote Food Access and Affordability**

The NYC Department of Health has documented the clear link between food insecurity and avoidable hospital admissions, poor diabetes management, and adverse pediatric developmental outcomes. Diet-related illness costs New York State an estimated \$9 billion annually in healthcare costs.



Nutrition incentive programs, including matching programs such as *Get the Good Stuff* and *Health Bucks*, provide greater access to nutritious food for SNAP households. Healthcare-based initiatives such as *Groceries to Go* provide nutritious food to vulnerable communities not eligible for other assistance, promoting better health outcomes for those living with chronic, diet-related diseases. These programs are cost-effective public health investments that increase food security, reduce future healthcare expenditures, and improve outcomes for low-income families.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

As Washington steps back, New York City must step up. The investments we are asking for today are not luxuries, they are the backbone of a food security system that millions of New Yorkers depend on to feed their families. Each dollar invested in food security strengthens health, stability, and economic resilience across our city.

Food Bank For New York City urges the Council to prioritize food security in the FY27 budget by committing to:

- \$100 million in baseline funding for Community Food Connection
- Support for SNAP administration and the HRA workforce to protect access to SNAP
- Continued investment in the Food Pantry Initiative, Food Access and Benefits Initiative, and Feeding Our Communities Initiative through the NYC Council
- Funding for Get the Good Stuff, Health Bucks, and Groceries to Go

Food Bank shows up for New Yorkers in need, every day and in times of crisis. Through hurricanes, the pandemic, and federal shutdowns, as well as the affordability crisis and the clawback of federal resources, our network is there. With the City's support, we will continue to do so. We thank the Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony and look forward to continuing our work alongside the Council and the members of this committee to serve New Yorkers in need as part of our mission to empower every New Yorker to achieve food security for good.

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