



**Testimony to the  
Joint Fiscal Committees on the SFY 2024-2025 Executive Budget  
Human Services**

**Submitted by:  
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding the Executive Budget proposal for Human Services and its impacts on efforts to end hunger in New York.

Hunger Solutions New York is a statewide nonprofit anti-hunger organization dedicated to alleviating hunger for all New Yorkers. Our organization's primary approach to addressing hunger is maximizing participation in the federally funded nutrition assistance programs, namely, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); the School Breakfast Program; the National School Lunch Program; the Summer Food Service Program; the Child and Adult Care Food Program; and Summer EBT.

For over 35 years, we have managed the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) through a contract with NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). NOEP provides outreach and application assistance to help low-income New Yorkers access SNAP and other federally funded nutrition programs. The program operates through a network of community-based organizations; statewide, 87 SNAP assistors provide services to individuals and families in their respective county or borough.

SNAP is our nation's largest anti-hunger program, helping more than [2.8 million](#) New Yorkers access benefits to supplement their monthly food costs. In recent years, SNAP has served [851,000 children](#), [685,000 seniors](#), and [57,000 veterans](#) across the state. Still, many New Yorkers are eligible but not participating. NOEP helps close this gap, ensuring New York is fully leveraging federal resources to support food security.

The FY2024 Enacted Budget funded NOEP at \$5.45 million, which included \$2 million in additional funding from the Legislature to support expanded services. The Legislature's investment enabled NOEP to add twenty-two new SNAP assistors in high-need and rural areas, and to expand remote services statewide. Last year alone, the program reached more than 163,000 potentially eligible New Yorkers with information about SNAP, and more than 32,500 households received SNAP benefits as a direct result of NOEP services.

We are grateful for the Legislature's added investment in last year's budget, an acknowledgement of the importance of connecting New Yorkers with federally funded nutrition assistance resources.

However, the FY2025 Executive Budget proposal does not sustain that funding. The proposal funds NOEP at \$3.503M, adding a cost-of-living adjustment to the \$3.45M included in the FY2024 Executive Budget, but removing the Legislature's \$2M addition.

In the absence of sustained funding, NOEP will be forced to scale back its impactful expansions at a time when hunger is on the rise. Nationally, [hunger](#) and [poverty](#) have increased over the last two years. Here in New York, more than [one in ten households](#) struggle with food insecurity, including nearly [one in six children](#). It is a critical time to ensure continued NOEP services across the state.

**If \$2 million in additional NOEP funding is not restored, the following counties will lose some or all NOEP services:**

- Albany, Broome, Erie, Monroe, Nassau, Niagara, Onondaga, Rockland, and Suffolk Counties plus every borough in New York City will lose SNAP assistors added over the last two years, despite continued high need. These areas will continue to have some NOEP services, but at greatly reduced capacity.
- Chemung, Cortland, Essex, Franklin, Lewis, Schuyler, and Washington Counties will lose all local NOEP services.
- All counties will have reduced access to remote NOEP services, an especially distressing loss in rural areas where transportation barriers often inhibit access to in-person assistance.

**To ensure continued access to NOEP services in all areas of the state, we ask the Legislature to fund NOEP at \$5.503M, restoring the previous \$2M investment.**

NOEP has a uniquely high return on investment for New York:

- Each state dollar invested in SNAP outreach is **federally matched, dollar-for-dollar**, by USDA SNAP outreach funds, drawing down federal funds to support the state's effort.
- In the last year, NOEP services helped draw down more than \$140M in federal SNAP benefits. Combined with the federal match for outreach funds, this drawdown provides an estimated **27-to-1 return on investment** to New York State.
- NOEP is an on-the-ground partner to OTDA, **taking administrative burdens off the LDSS/HRA** system. Thousands of phone calls and prescreenings are diverted from LDSS/HRA and handled by NOEP. Applications completed through NOEP are easier for LDSS/HRA staff to process because they are complete and accurate.
- **SNAP helps alleviate poverty.** An estimated [556,000 New Yorkers](#) – including 218,000 children – were lifted from poverty as a result of SNAP each year between 2014 and 2018.
- Maximizing **SNAP supports New York's economy.** SNAP is an important revenue source for the more than [16,700](#) SNAP retailers across the state. During weak economic times, every [\\$1 in SNAP generates \\$1.50](#) in economic activity.
- SNAP provides **nine meals for every one meal provided through the emergency food system** of food pantries and soup kitchens. Ensuring the federally funded food security foundation is as strong as possible frees up the state's investment in the emergency food system to meet residents' emergency – not chronic – food needs.
- SNAP outreach is a **natural complement to a Healthy School Meals for All program**, another critical anti-hunger proposal we urge the Legislature to champion in the budget. Children in households participating in SNAP are automatically certified for federally funded free school meals, minimizing the state-level cost of a universal school meal program.

- SNAP will **streamline and maximize the reach of the new Summer EBT program** launching in summer 2024. For eligible low-income families, Summer EBT will provide \$120 per child in federal food benefits during the summer, when kids lose access to school meals. Children who participate in SNAP will automatically receive Summer EBT benefits without an additional application, minimizing administrative burdens for families, state agencies, and schools.

In addition to fully funding NOEP, we urge the Legislature to support the following proposals:

- **Establish and fund a statewide Healthy School Meals for All program, ensuring access to free school breakfast and lunch for all students.** Though funding for school meals falls outside of the Human Services budget, we urge all members of the Legislature – particularly those committed to meeting the needs of low-income New Yorkers – to support this far-reaching anti-hunger investment. Universal school meals alleviate food insecurity and help lift children out of poverty, while saving families an estimated \$150 per month per child in food costs. The FY2024 Enacted Budget took an important step in this direction by investing in the expansion of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). However, CEP does not reach all children struggling with hunger. An estimated 320,000 students live in non-CEP schools, where a family of four earning just \$56,000 – far below a livable wage in New York – does not qualify for free school meals. Universal free school meals are the best way to ensure equitable access for all students. Eight other states have implemented similar policies, recognizing the importance of school meals for food security and educational and health equity. New York can and must be next.
- **Support administrative funding for Summer EBT.** The FY2025 Executive Budget includes approximately \$13M in funding to support administration of the new Summer EBT program, which is expected to draw down more than \$200M annually in federally funded food benefits for low-income children. We encourage lawmakers to maintain administrative support for this new federal nutrition assistance program in the FY2025 Enacted Budget and beyond.
- **Provide level funding of \$250,000 for outreach and assistance for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).** CACFP is a federally funded nutrition assistance program that provides healthy meals and snacks to low-income children in child care centers, family day care, and afterschool programs. Currently, only 50% of New York’s licensed or registered day care and afterschool providers participate in CACFP. The FY2025 Executive Budget maintains New York’s investment of \$250,000, budgeted through the Office of Children and Family Services, for outreach and technical support to help eligible child care providers connect with CACFP.
- **Fund Nourish New York at \$75M and the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) at \$64M** to support New York’s emergency food system of food banks, food pantries, emergency shelters, and community-based organizations.
- **Increase the SNAP minimum benefit to \$100 per month.** New Yorkers who rely on SNAP experienced significant cuts when pandemic emergency allotments ended in March, with some households now receiving just \$23 per month for groceries. We encourage New York to provide a state supplement to support a more adequate minimum benefit.

Hunger Solutions New York strongly encourages the Legislature to adopt these proposals in the final state budget. These investments will allow New York to continue to support low-income families and individuals and further efforts to reduce hunger across the state.