



ROTTERDAM COMMUNITY CENTER

January 22, 2024

Testimony Submitted by:

Rev. Joe Paparone, Community Organizer,
on behalf of the Rotterdam Community Center,
for the Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Health

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the proposed budget for New York State. In 2023 our combined programs welcomed 12,107 guests and served 47,398 meals, all powered by 5,245 volunteer hours.

Our programs rely on essential state programs like the ***Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program*** (HPNAP) and ***Nourish New York*** to provide emergency food support to our neighbors and community. We are proud to join our voices with other emergency food providers across the state in the Alliance for a Hunger Free New York to call for increased funding for both of these critical programs, to \$75 million each, and to expand direct contracts with emergency food programs.

Food insecurity rates are growing faster in New York State than the national average. Between 2021 and 2023, self-reported food insecurity among New Yorkers increased by 87% according to the U.S. Census Household Pulse Survey. This far outpaces the national average, which has only increased by 35% over the same period of time.

Multiple intersecting trends and crises have contributed to ongoing food insecurity in our community. The end of federal SNAP benefits, ongoing inflation, inadequate wages, skyrocketing rents, and unaffordable health care, all contribute to the difficult daily decisions our neighbors must make as they strive to make ends meet. Emergency food programs like ours provide a critical lifeline and support to struggling families.

New York is still recovering from the economic fallout of the pandemic. Our neighbors experiencing food insecurity are losing support and resources while their needs continue to grow. It is essential that you fully fund these programs in the next budget so New Yorkers have the resources they need to survive.

Thank you for this consideration.

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