

Testimony submitted on behalf of  
**Food Bank For New York City**  
for the **New York State Joint Health Committee Budget Hearing**  
February 11, 2025

## Overview

Thank you to Chairs Rivera and Paulin, and all members of the Senate and Assembly Health Committees for the opportunity to submit testimony on the proposed FY2026 Executive Budget for New York State. Food Bank For New York City (Food Bank) has provided free, nutritious, and culturally appropriate meals to New Yorkers in need for over 40 years. We partner with over 800 organizations across the five boroughs including food pantries and soup kitchens, senior centers, shelters, schools and other community and faith-based organizations to provide **food assistance, income support services, and nutrition education** to New Yorkers of all ages. Food Bank also convenes the *New York City SNAP Task Force* which supports the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) access at community organizations city-wide.

### Food Need and the Affordability Crisis

Food assistance organizations across the city and state are serving an increased demand with dwindling resources, while they have become vital for non-citizen residents who cannot utilize federal nutrition programs like SNAP. Food banks like ours and the food pantries, soup kitchens, and other organizations that make up the food assistance network, rely on the essential support from New York State programs to bring nutritious, culturally appropriate, and regionally sourced food to New Yorkers in need.

**In our most recent member survey, Food Bank’s network of community-based organizations reported that visits to food assistance programs remain 80% above pre-pandemic levels.** The nationwide rise in the cost of living, particularly increased costs for food and other necessities like childcare and housing, have put families in need at greater risk, forcing hard choices in the face of already limited resources. Today, many pandemic era resources have long ended, and our distribution of food has fallen to 91 million meals in FY24, despite continued high need.

### Key FY26 New York State Budget Anti-Hunger Priorities

As the Legislature considered their priorities for the FY2026 Budget, we urge them to prioritize these key anti-hunger programs:

- **\$75 million for the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP)**
- **\$75 million for Nourish New York (NNY)**
- **\$5.624 million for the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP)**
- **Raise the SNAP Minimum in New York State to \$100/month (S.662/ A.1318)**

## New York State’s Impact on Food Security

### Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) and Nourish NY

**Food Bank commends the executive budget proposal for funding HPNAP at last year’s full allocation at \$57.8M and increasing Nourish NY funding to \$55M.** This investment acknowledges the continuing demand for food faced

by community-based organizations and food banks like ours, as well as the crucial role these food assistance programs play in providing nutritious food options to New Yorkers in need and supporting their path out of poverty. **We ask that funding is increased to \$75M for each program to more accurately reflect community need, support New York’s agriculture economy, and strengthen the food system for all of us.**

**Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP)** is a lifeline for nearly 3 million New Yorkers, including 1.3 million New York City residents and 1 in 4 New York City children, who rely on emergency food programs to keep food on the table. Through lines of credit at Food Bank and the United Way of New York City, HPNAP enables local food assistance providers to distribute millions of pounds of nutritionally balanced food to New Yorkers experiencing hunger and food insecurity – many of whom are excluded from federal nutrition programs. Each year, the number of applicants for HPNAP funding to Food Bank increases compared to the previous year. Many agencies report that they exhaust their HPNAP funds before the end of the funding period. We are advocating for increased funding for HPNAP to allow the food assistance network to expand its reach and better serve New Yorkers in need.

**Nourish New York (NNY)** helps food banks distribute New York-grown produce and other New York-produced agricultural products across our network. The program helps improve food choice at food distributions ensuring a dignified experience for New Yorkers in need. Since 2020, NNY has provided over 70 million pounds of healthy, nutritious food to hungry New Yorkers while generating \$150M in direct benefits for over 4,000 producers across the state. The program also directly supports producers – from the fishing industry on Long Island to fruit and vegetable growers up north and out west to dairy farmers across the state.

### **The Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP)**

**We ask that NOEP funding is sustained at \$5.624M, reflecting the \$2M legislative add-on from last year’s enacted budget.** NOEP is New York’s largest SNAP outreach, education and application assistance program and increases SNAP participation among eligible residents and helps to maximize federal matching funds coming into the state, helping households, communities, and the regional food system. At the community level, NOEP manages a network of community-based organizations, including working with Food Bank’s SNAP team, skilled at conducting SNAP outreach and enrollment assistance. In 2022, NOEP helped more than 26,000 households receive more than \$114 million in annual SNAP benefits and **generate more than \$175 million in economic activity in New York state.** Investment in this critical service brings a significant return on investment, bringing federal SNAP dollars to New Yorkers in need, and to local grocers and regional food system. **The current executive budget proposal of \$3.624M is a cut to NOEP funding.**

### **SNAP Minimum in New York State**

**We ask that New York creates and funds a state SNAP minimum benefit program (S.662/ A.1318),** so that eligible households receive a monthly state SNAP benefit equal to the difference between the household’s federal SNAP monthly allotment and one hundred dollars (\$100). This increase will make SNAP a stronger resource for the tens of thousands of New Yorkers who are eligible for SNAP but at a benefit amount that is less than \$100 per month, including people on a fixed income such as older adults. New York has the opportunity to follow our neighbors in New Jersey, acknowledging that the federal minimum of \$23 per month is not enough to supplement a grocery budget in our state. This will improve nutrition for seniors and households on the cusp of poverty and improve health outcomes and financial security for older adults.

## Healthy School Meals for All New York Kids

**Governor Hochul’s commitment to fund cost-free breakfast and lunch for 2.7 million students in the executive budget proposal** is a critical step in addressing food insecurity and supporting success for New York’s kids. We ask that the legislature supports the Governor’s proposal. Providing free meals for all students — regardless of income — is a proven strategy to reduce food insecurity, improve mental and physical health, support students’ ability to thrive academically, and bolster educational, health, and economic equity.

## Further Action: Achieving Food Security through Affordability

### Affordable Childcare for New York Families

**Further, we commend the Governor for proposing bold investments and goals for childcare that can be transformative for the millions of New Yorkers that made it loud and clear that the rising cost of childcare is driving them to food pantries.** Governor Hochul’s proposed \$110 million investment to build and repair childcare facilities and \$10 million in additional low-income support are bold investments in achieving universal childcare access and building food security. More than [80% of NYC families](#) with children under 5 cannot afford childcare, with the highest childcare cost burden and the highest food insecurity rates in the Bronx and Brooklyn. Nearly [1 in 5 children](#) in New York State lives in poverty, in NYC that number is closer to [1 in 4](#). We ask that the legislature meet the executive proposal and we also urge further investment in afterschool programs, which are equally critical for making New York affordable and sustainable for working families.

### Housing Stability for New Yorkers

New Yorkers experiencing housing insecurity are 3x more likely to experience food insecurity. We ask that the state budget **strengthen and expand the state housing voucher program** to improve housing affordability and help keep New Yorkers in their homes, stabilizing families at risk of displacement. The executive budget proposes initiatives to streamline housing development, expand supportive housing, and address barriers to stability, all of which build on **NYC Mayor Eric Adams’ City of Yes** model, and are encouraging steps toward addressing the housing crisis. However, we must go further by increasing funding for housing vouchers, which are essential for families who face food insecurity and are at risk of displacement.

## Conclusion

New Yorkers experiencing food insecurity are losing support and resources while their need remains high. Food Bank For New York City supports the state’s continued investment in critical food assistance and nutrition programs. By prioritizing key areas—food and nutrition assistance, affordable childcare, and housing stability—New York’s leaders can create meaningful, lasting change for families across the state. We ask the legislature to build on the proposals of the Executive Budget by advancing key food security programs throughout the negotiation process, and committing to the priorities shared above.