



~~HUNGER~~
FREE
AMERICA

Surging Pandemic Hunger Stemmed by Government Safety Net Boost



New York State and New York City Hunger
Atlas and Annual Survey Report, 2021

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Executive Summary

- Statewide in New York, during the pandemic, the number of people who “didn’t have enough to eat” soared to 6.158 million in April of 2022, but dropped to about 2.715 million by September of 2021, according to U.S. Census Household Pulse data.
- The 56 percent drop in food insufficiency in New York State coincided with a massive boost in federal food and cash aid. From May 2020 to August 2021 alone, federal spending on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – which was called the Food Stamp Program before 2009 – nearly doubled, from \$362 million to \$693 million monthly.

Pulse Survey Respondents vs SNAP Benefits by Date (NY State)



- The number of people in the NYC Metropolitan Region who couldn’t afford enough food soared to 6.219 million people May of 2020, but dropped to 3.425 million by August 2021, according to U.S. Census Household Pulse data.
- There was a 45 percent drop in food hardship in the New York Metropolitan Region between May 2020 and August 2021, coinciding with a massive boost in federal food and cash aid. During that time, in New York City alone, federal spending on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – which used to be called the Food Stamp Program before 2009 – nearly doubled, from \$288 million to \$428 million, monthly.
- Between 2018-2020, 14.0 percent of the New York City’s population – equaling 1.164 million people –suffered from food insecurity, unable to afford a sufficient supply of food, including 19.0 percent of all children, 9.0 percent of all employed adults, and 11.0 percent of all older New Yorkers. The overall number of people food insecure represented a significant jump over the 2013-2015 time period,

when 12.8 percent of the New York City's population – equaling 1.094 million people – were food insecure.

- Citywide in New York, 84 percent of responding food pantries and soup kitchens reported that they served more people in 2021 than 2020.
- The Bronx remains New York City's hungriest borough in every category with, in 2018 – 2020, more than one in four Bronx residents (25.4 percent) experiencing food insecurity. This includes 35.8 percent of all children, nearly 18 percent of working adults, and more than 21 percent of older residents (60+).
- Between 2018-2020, 11.3 percent of the New York State's population – equaling 2.179 million people – suffered from food insecurity, including 16.0 percent of all children, 7.9 percent of all employed adults, and 7.2 percent of all older residents. That overall number of people food insecure represented an increase over the 2013-2015 time period when 11.0 percent of the New York State's population – equaling 2.166 million people – were food insecure.
- The Utica-Rome Metropolitan Region had the state's highest metropolitan level of food insecurity in 2018-2020, 19.4 percent, followed by the Syracuse region at 14.5 percent, and the Albany- Schenectady-Troy region at 14.3%

I. A Message from Hunger Free America CEO Joel Berg

This summer, to mark my 20th year as leader of a national anti-hunger nonprofit group, I drove myself 15,397 miles from coast-to-coast, making more than 80 hunger-related site visits and stops in 37 states.

So, what did I learn?

Thankfully, for those (like me) with enough money to buy food, some highly local food traditions are still thriving and delicious: lobster rolls in Maine, BBQ (pork in North Carolina, beef in Texas, of course), green chili enchiladas in New Mexico, and deep-dish pizza in Chicago.

Yet the increasing diversity of America has resulted in a preponderance of excellent, authentic ethnic specialties in surprising places: Jamaican Jerk Chicken in Roanoke, Virginia; Thai Pad See Ew in Dothan, Alabama; Vietnamese Pho, in Bentonville, Arkansas; and Salvadorean Pupusas in Webb City, Missouri. There are now top-notch tacos served in practically everywhere in the U.S. where Mexican-Americans live.

Unfortunately, I also found persistent, systemic, food insecurity – with large numbers of people struggling to afford food – in virtually every rural area, city, and suburb I visited. While some Americans thought hunger was a brand-new phenomenon during the pandemic, that's far from the truth. In 2019, when the economy was still theoretically strong and COVID-19 had yet to hit the U.S., 35 million Americans were food insecure, according to [USDA](#). Most were in working families, earning paltry incomes that didn't fully cover their costs of housing, health care, transportation, utilities, childcare, prescription drugs, and yes, food.

Then the pandemic hit, and things went from worse to worser. Tens of millions lost their jobs or had further reductions in their paltry incomes, leaving them with even less money for food. The 29 million U.S. children who relied on school lunches and breakfasts lost them virtually overnight and thousands of senior meals programs nationwide shuttered their doors.

As I visited food charities from coast to coast this summer, I learned that two things that were true before the pandemic became truer than ever: one, that while nonprofit groups perform heroic work filling in gaps in the safety net, they can never do anything more than make a dent in the hunger problem and; two, that the most impactful measures to reduce hunger in America, by far, are those funded by the federal government.

Even before the pandemic, I calculated that the dollar amount of paid food provided to low-income Americans by the federal government safety net (SNAP, formerly called Food Stamps; WIC, for pregnant women and infants; school meals; commodities for food banks, meals for older Americans, etc.) equaled about 15 times the dollar amount of food provided by every food charity in America.

Over the last year and a half – due to the insistence of Democratic leaders in Congress, and since January, of the leadership of the Biden Administration – the domestic nutrition safety net was dramatically expanded. [USDA SNAP spending alone more than doubled](#) between February 2020 and May 2021, eventually giving out \$10 billion worth of food in May alone. The federal government made it easier for schools to distribute meals to kids, temporarily waiving archaic rules that previously prevented free meals for all kids from being distributed in areas that were only somewhat impoverished and that forced summer meals to be eaten by children on site, even in locales with soaring temperatures and high crime rates. Congress created the Pandemic-EBT Program, which is giving out tens of billions of dollars' worth of food to the families of tens of millions of children who attended schools that were closed due to the pandemic.

The most iconic hunger-related image of the pandemic was that of [thousands of cars lined up at a San Antonio food bank](#), but that overshadowed the reality that, [in that same month in that same county](#), 294,512 local residents received \$33.6 million in SNAP benefits, absolutely dwarfing the charitable distributions.

While tens of millions of Americans faced food hardships during the pandemic, the nation avoided mass starvation (such as in Ethiopia and North Korea) precisely because this massive federal support for food – combined with large infusions of federal cash into struggling households – enabled families to obtain and afford more food.

According to the [Census Bureau](#), the number of Americans who didn't have enough food in a seven-day period dropped from 24 million this January to 17 million this August. The [Hamilton Project found](#) that food hardship in children was reduced by 30%

This ground-breaking report further verifies all those other previous sources of data – and further proves that the federal government's expanded food and cash aid was the key factor in preventing mass starvation during the height of the pandemic.

It also proves that hunger, food insecurity, and nutritional insecurity are still rampant in every borough of New York City and every county of New York State, and that improved public policies are, by far, the most effective way to end hunger.

That's why both the direct programming work of Hunger Free America – and the detailed public policy proposals included in this report – are more important than ever.

With your donations and policy support, we **can** end hunger in America.

Sincerely,



Joel Berg
CEO, Hunger Free America

II. Methodology

Data from this report was gathered from the USDA's Food Security Supplement to the December 2018 Current Population Survey (CPS). In total, 34,330 households completed the Food Security Supplement in 2020, which is nationally representative after applying the Food Security Supplement weights.

Citywide data was analyzed by county, with "citywide" being comprised of Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, and Richmond counties. While Staten Island (Richmond County) is applied in the citywide data, the sample size is insufficient to conduct an accurate separate analysis specific to the county.

All analyses used the 12 Month Food Security Summary variable, HRFS12M1, which is the same variable used by the USDA to analyze overall household food insecurity. Data on employed adults was obtained by layering those classified as "employed" in the PREXPLF demographic variable. Calculations for food insecure seniors used the PRTAGE variable, restricted to those 60+ years old. The analysis on food insecurity among children used the PRTAGE variable as well, restricted to those 17 years and younger.

Numbers were calculated as three year averages to increase statistical accuracy due to the relatively small sample size at the county and metropolitan area levels. In order to obtain food insecurity data at the individual level as opposed to the household level, person-level weighting was used in this analysis. Food insecurity figures represent those classified by the USDA as having "low" and "very low" food security.

It is important to note that the statistics on food insecurity from the USDA should be interpreted as "individuals living in food insecure households" as opposed to "food insecure individuals". This is due to the fact that the food security survey measures food security status at the household level. Because household members experience food insecurity differently, with some members being more affected than others, this distinction is necessary.

For the Household Pulse Survey, Hunger Free America's analysis identifies responses of "often not enough to eat", "sometimes not enough to eat", and "enough, but not always the kinds of food (I/we) wanted to eat" as food insufficient, and "enough of the kinds of food (I/we) wanted to eat" as food sufficient. In order to compare the irregular weekly pulse survey dates with monthly SNAP data, weekly food insufficiency figures were averaged out in accordance with the month they most closely aligned.

Our 2021 survey of food pantries and soup kitchens was sent to Hunger Free America's national database of food pantries, soup kitchens, and/or some variety of emergency food program (EFP). In total, we received 56 responses from EFPs in New York. This year's survey was more limited due to a shorter timeframe than usual.

III. Food Insecurity During the COVID-19 Pandemic in New York

According to the USDA's 2020 Household Food Security data, the number of food insecure individuals in the U.S. increased by over 3 million from 2019 to 2020 (Table 1). New York State experienced no statistically significant change in both the number and percent of food insecure individuals, however, New York City exceeded national trends with the rate of food insecure individuals increasing by over two percentage points (from 13.7% to 15.9% in 2020).

Table 1- Changes in Food Insecure Individuals from 2019 to 2020

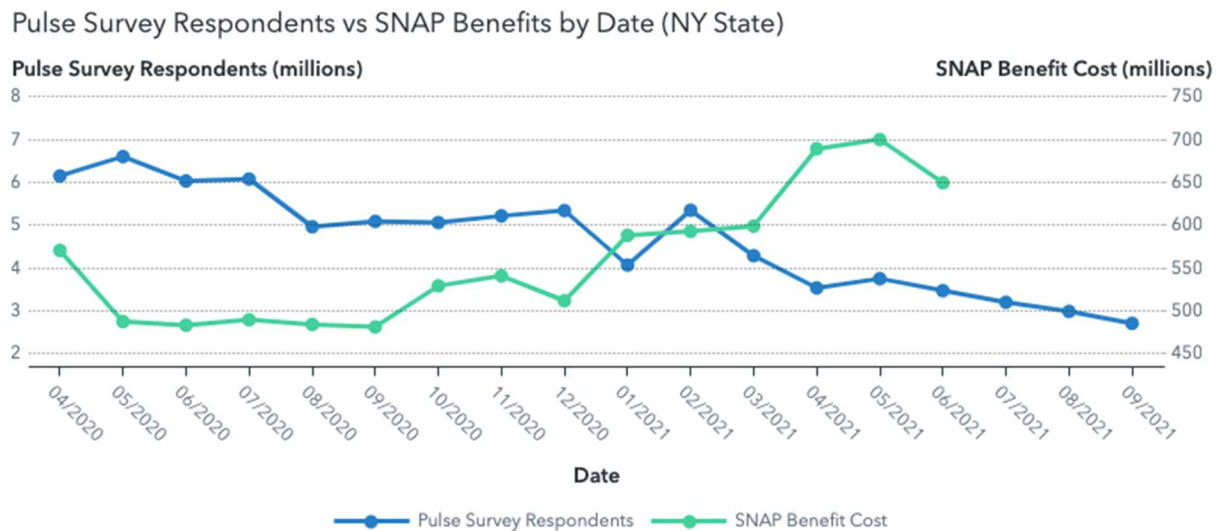
	2019	2020
National	35,206,852 (10.9%)	38,286,433 (11.8%)
New York State	2,229,028 (11.6%)	2,199,833 (11.5%)
New York City	1,132,547 (13.7%)	1,302,974 (15.9%)

In the spring of 2020, NYC became an epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic's spread in the U.S. The virus' spread throughout the state and the rest of the country had a unique effect on hunger as millions of workers lost their jobs, school closures eliminated vital meals for children, and senior meal programs were ended. In response, the state and federal governments acted to combat hunger through efforts such as the federal stimulus checks, increases to SNAP benefits, P-EBT food benefits, and the GetFoodNYC food delivery program. New Census Bureau data shows that massive hunger rates in 2020 were reduced through government action, resulting in much smaller increases to hunger as seen in the USDA's 2020 figures.

The US Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey (HPS) that began on April 23rd, 2020 shows how hunger changed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the USDA's food security measures and the HPS's food sufficiency measures are not directly comparable (due to different methodologies, response rates, and time periods covered), the pulse survey results fill a crucial gap in data covering each month of the pandemic and offer a helpful supplement to the USDA's food security measure. The HPS measures food insufficiency over the last week, asking the degree to which the household had enough to eat.

By comparing the number of pulse survey respondents who faced food insufficiency and the number of SNAP dollars allocated to New York State, we can begin to see the relationship between the SNAP program and food insufficiency. Although there is insufficient data to prove correlation or causation, figure 1 shows that food insufficiency tends to be lower when SNAP spending is higher. It should also be noted that the graph begins to inverse when the Biden administration took office in January, 2021, marking historic increases to the federal safety net.

Figure 1 – Pulse Survey Respondents vs SNAP Benefit Cost for New York State



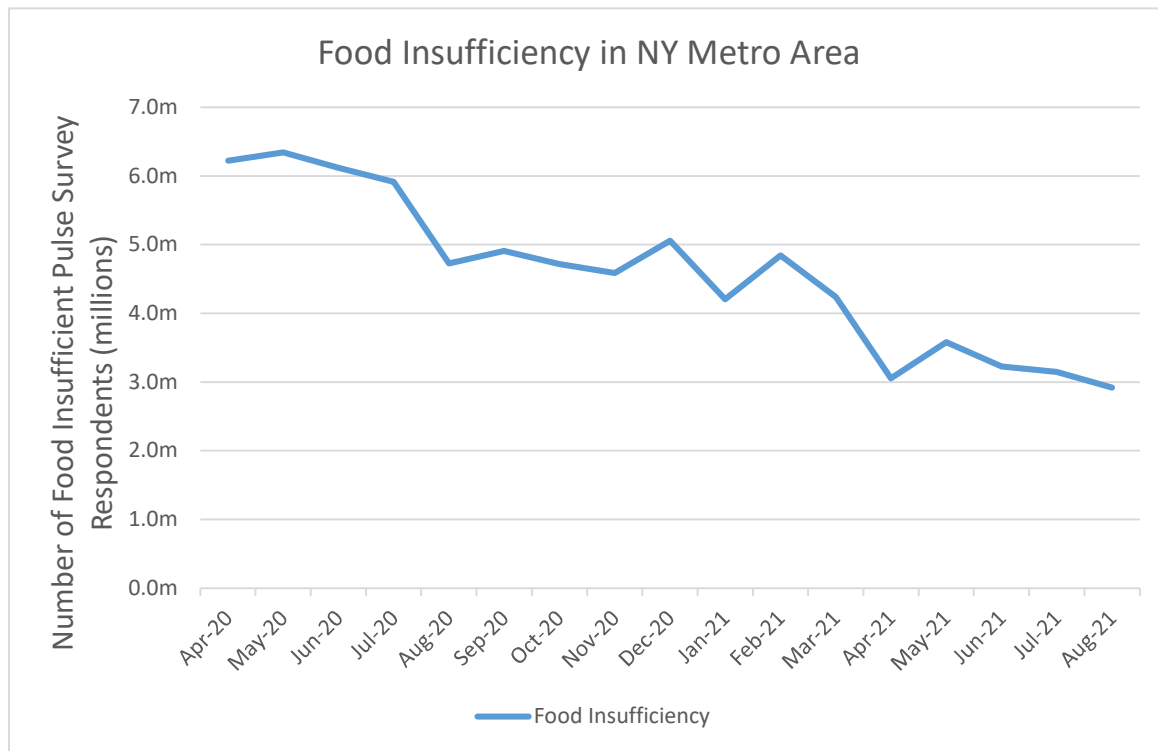
The 56 percent drop in food insufficiency in New York State coincided with a massive boost in federal food and cash aid. From May 2020 to August 2021 alone, federal spending on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – which was called the Food Stamp Program before 2009 – nearly doubled, from \$362 million to \$693 million, monthly.

Data from the Census Bureau’s 2020 Supplemental Poverty Measure shows the profound impact government action and increases to the federal safety net can have. An estimated 11.7 million people were lifted out of poverty due to the first two rounds of stimulus payments. SNAP and school lunch programs combined lifted 3.2 million people from poverty, with the only programs that had a higher impact on poverty being social security, the stimulus payments, unemployment insurance, and refundable tax credits. In the summer of 2021, the enhanced Child Tax Credit (CTC) had an immediate impact on hunger with food insufficiency decreasing by 5.1% in households with children after the first payment went out, while households without children experienced an 8% increase in food insufficiency during the same seven-week time period.

The impact of these programs illustrates the degree to which hunger and poverty in the U.S. is a policy choice. Strong action by the government has the power to end hunger far more effectively than the current reliance on charitable feeding programs. Increased efforts from food banks, food pantries, and community meals have played a vital role in meeting the immediate need posed by the pandemic (particularly for individuals who are ineligible for SNAP benefits), however, only the federal government has the power to enact the widespread changes necessary to end hunger.

The number of people in the NYC Metropolitan Region (Figure 2) who couldn't afford enough food soared to 6.219 million people May of 2020, but dropped to 3.425 million by August 2021, according to U.S. Census Household Pulse data.

Figure 2 – Pulse Survey Respondents Didn't Have Enough Food NYC Metropolitan Region



The 45 percent drop in food hardship New York Metropolitan Region between May 2020 and August 2021, coinciding with a massive boost in federal food and cash aid. During that time, in New York City alone, federal spending on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – which used to be called the Food Stamp Program before 2009 – nearly doubled, from \$288 million to \$428 million, monthly.

IV. Food Insecurity in New York City

Hunger estimates at the borough-level are calculated using three year averages from the USDA's data in order to increase accuracy due to small sample sizes. Staten Island is included in citywide calculations, but is not reported on individually aside from overall figures due to the small sample size.

Across New York City, 14.0% of the population, or 1.2 million people, lived in food insecure households between 2018 and 2020 (Table 2). The Bronx remains New York City's hungriest borough in terms of prevalence, with 25.4% of residents (316,117 people) living in food insecure households. Brooklyn contains the highest number of individuals living in food insecure households, reaching 392,682 people between 2018 and 2020. Trends in hunger over time vary between borough, with an overall increase in hunger occurring between 2015-2017 and 2018-2020 averages. The rate of food insecure individuals remained just under pre-recession levels of 14.5% between 2006-2008.

Table 2 – Overall Food Insecurity in New York City

	Citywide	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan*	Queens	Staten Island*
2018-20 Average	1,164,372 (14.0%)	316,117 (25.4%)	392,682 (14.1%)	102,951 (6.3%)	249,726 (11.1%)	110,864 (23.4%)
2015-17 Average	1,090,936 (12.8%)	290,469 (26.3%)	368,799 (11.5%)	180,326 (11.3%)	202,417 (8.7%)	48,925 (17.3%)
2006-08 Average	1,073,053 (14.5%)	326,334 (28.5%)	244,314 (11.0%)	186,661 (13.7%)	268,796 (11.2%)	46,948 (17.0%)

**Low samples could result in errors for data in Manhattan and Staten Island*

Nearly one out of every five children (19.0%) in New York City experiences food insecurity, while over one third (35.8%) of children in the Bronx are food insecure (Table 3). The Bronx has over twice the rate of food insecure employed adults than citywide levels, with more than one in six (17.7%) experiencing food insecurity in the borough (Table 4). The citywide rate of food insecurity remained lower than pre-recession levels for every population group except for seniors, which increased from 10.0% in 2006-08 to 11.0% from 2018-20 (Table 5).

Table 3 – Food Insecurity Among Children in New York City

	Citywide	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan*	Queens
2018-20 Average	322,227 (19.0%)	95,982 (35.8%)	76,658 (14.1%)	16,841 (7.1%)	84,976 (16.8%)
2015-17 Average	324,432 (18.0%)	95,365 (37.6%)	105,122 (14.2%)	47,761 (17.5%)	56,619 (11.8%)
2006-08 Average	342,141 (19.5%)	129,850 (35.4%)	85,094 (14.9%)	52,969 (24.0%)	69,990 (12.8%)

**Low samples could result in errors for data in Manhattan*

Table 4 – Food Insecurity Among Employed Adults in New York City

	Citywide	Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan*	Queens*
2018-20 Average	333,328 (9.0%)	85,717 (17.7%)	119,219 (10.4%)	31,955 (3.8%)	66,734 (6.5%)
2015-17 Average	351,912 (8.9%)	67,896 (16.7%)	113,148 (7.9%)	74,509 (8.4%)	75,505 (6.9%)
2006-08 Average	327,561 (9.8%)	84,260 (20.0%)	63,347 (7.0%)	51,020 (6.8%)	123,222 (11.0%)

**Low samples could result in errors for data in Manhattan and Queens*

Table 5 – Food Insecurity Among Older New Yorkers (60+)

	2018-20 Average	2015-17 Average	2006-08 Average
Citywide Food Insecurity Among Older New Yorkers (60+)	206,932 (11.0%)	187,181 (10.9%)	118,762 (10.0%)

V. Food Insecurity in New York State

More than 11.3% of New York State residents, or 2.2 million people, lived in food insecure households (Table 5) from 2018-2020. This includes 16.0% of children in the state (647,829), 7.9% of employed adults (642,470), and 7.2% of older New Yorkers (342,245).

Table 5 – Food Insecurity in New York State

	2018-20	2015-17	2006-08
Average Number of Food Insecure	2,179,289	2,165,567	2,095,572
Average Percentage of Food Insecure	11.3%	11.1%	12.1%
Average Number of Food Insecure Children	647,829	652,448	688,627
Average Percentage of Food Insecure Children	16.0%	15.8%	17.0%
Average Number of Food Insecure Employed Adults	642,470	666,852	709,650
Average Percentage of Food Insecure Employed Adults	7.9%	7.3%	8.6%
Average Number of Food Insecure Older New Yorkers (60+)	342,245	312,210	225,808
Average Percentage of Food Insecure Older New Yorkers (60+)	7.2%	7.2%	7.2%

Calculations for New York metropolitan areas use the Census Bureau's metropolitan statistical area (MSA) mapping. The New York MSA covers a wider geographical range than the five borough calculations above, and include parts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Overall, these metropolitan areas have higher rates of food insecurity than the state average of 11.3%, with the exceptions of the New York MSA and Rochester.

Table 6 – Food Insecurity in New York Metropolitan Areas, 2018-20 Averages

	Number of Food Insecure People	Percentage of Food Insecure Population
Albany-Schenectady-Troy	107,742	14.3%
Buffalo-Cheektowaga-Niagara Falls	149,217	12.2%
New York-Newark-Jersey City	1,827,751	10.2%
Rochester	59,807	6.7%
Syracuse	128,550	14.5%
Utica-Rome	37,398	19.4%

VI. Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen Survey

In NYC, 84% of feeding programs reported that they served more people in 2021 than 2020. Despite this increase in people served, 88% of feeding programs said they served enough food to meet demand. Regarding the impact of increases in federal aid programs, 7% of all respondents said the boosts in federal aid reduced their demand, while 63% did not see increases to these programs affect their demand, with the remaining 30% being unsure of the federal aid boosts impact. 85% of feeding programs reported that they provided their clients with the nutritional quality of food they wanted in 2021.

In New York State (excluding NYC), 50% of feeding programs reported serving more people in 2021 than 2020. 100% of respondents reported that they served enough food to meet their demand. Regarding the impact of increases in federal aid programs, 50% of all respondents said the boosts in federal aid reduced their demand, while 25% did not see increases to these programs affect their demand, with the remaining 25% being unsure of the federal aid boosts impact. 100% of feeding programs reported that they provided their clients with the nutritional quality of food they wanted in 2021.

Below are a few quotes from feeding programs throughout New York on some of their success and challenges, along with why they think New Yorkers face hunger:

“COVID during the early stages was depicted as a war zone in our community with activity only during our food distribution hours of people searching for much needed food for their families. We were blessed to be a go to and support for the community during this Pandemic. People in our community face hunger due to the lack of money and employment. Many on our food lines would love to be employed, and often express the desire and need for employment and requesting an opportunity to work.”

- St. Stephen Outreach Community Development Corporation, Brooklyn

“We strongly believe in serving humanity and understand that many of our constituents are undocumented, not citizens and we serve them all.”

- Las Maravillas del Exodo, Brooklyn

“We still have pandemic level demand, at the same time United Way has reduced our funding back to original levels.”

- Atonement Lutheran Church Pantry, East Elmhurst

“We received a wonderful grant, but we can’t spend it on the items we need especially frozen foods. Need to have access to more frozen meats.”

- Bethany Baptist Church, Jamaica

“The reason why the people suffer hunger in our communities is because the rents are very high, and medicine is very expensive but we meet the needs by providing each household with the amount of food that’s needed to keep them until the next pantry day.

I believe that the pantry should offer them more fresh vegetables as we do and we make sure that the diabetics people with heart condition high cholesterol HIV vegans vegetarians also received the foods that are needed in their homes to survive and stay healthy and we're blessed to be having your services to contribute towards the people in need."

- Jesus is Justice Mission Inc., New York

"Since the pandemic we have been serving a bag lunch outside. It has its issues, but we keep trying because the community depends on our program. We are grateful for the support we receive from different programs."

- Bread Basket at Woodycrest United Methodist Church, Bronx

"Low-income communities are hurting because of the astronomical costs of foods."

- The Hope Center Development Corporation, Brooklyn

VII. Policy Recommendations

Proposed Federal Policy Steps

- The U.S. Senate should rapidly pass President's Biden's Build Back better Bill, which has already passed the U.S. House. This historic bill overwhelmingly aids working Americans, and would dramatically reduce child poverty and child hunger, by: expanding free schools meals, giving low-income parents extra food money over summers, funding universal prekindergarten, raising living allowances and increasing the number of slots in the AmeriCorps national service program, extending the recent massive increase in the Child Tax Credit, helping families afford day care for their children and home health care for older Americans, and reducing the price of prescription drugs.
- Raise the minimum wage nationwide, in a manner that can pass the U.S. Senate, by indexing state and local wages to state and local median household incomes.
- The Biden Administration should create a comprehensive, federal, cross-agency plan on hunger, food, and nutrition in 2021 and roll it out at a White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health in 2022.
- Pass and implement the HOPE Act of 2021 (H.R. 2336/S.1181) that would:
 1. Authorize three federal agencies—HUD, USDA, and HHS—to enable select state, county, city, and tribal governments to create pilot programs in economically distressed rural, urban, and suburban areas as well as state-wide.
 2. Leverage client-facing technology to coordinate access to multiple government agencies that work on anti-poverty, health care, nutrition, housing, work support programs, and nonprofit aid for low-income Americans.
 3. Establish voluntary accounts that empower low-income families to easily access and monitor—within one central online account—the status, summary, and recertification deadlines for all their benefits and savings.
 4. Establish a merit-based competition to award HOPE Technology Innovation Contracts that help ensure client-facing technology apps, widgets, and templates are created for pilot entities to use to create meaningful HOPE Accounts.
 5. Make permanent a recent federal law change to make it easier for low-income college students to accept SNAP.
- Change military allowance and SNAP rules to reduce hunger among active-duty military families and veterans.

- Accelerate and integrate SNAP and WIC online food ordering and home delivery and ensure better coordination to ease the burden for both consumers and retailers.
- Rapidly speed up efforts to enable low-income Americans to use smart phones to make contactless purchases of food using SNAP, WIC, and Pandemic-EBT Benefits.
- Pass a Child Nutrition Re-Authorization Bill that: makes nutritious school meals free and universal, boosts in-classroom school breakfasts, makes Summer EBT universal and permanent, strengthens nutritional standards, and makes WIC an entitlement.
- Increase funding for the USDA Food and Nutrition Service National Hunger Clearinghouse/ National Hunger Hotline contract.
- Enact a government-wide “Assets Empowerment/Middle Class Wealth Generation Agenda” to dramatically increase economic opportunity and mobility by enabling more families to transition from owing non-productive debts interest to owning assets such as first homes and small businesses.

Proposed New York State Public Policy Steps

- Launch pilot projects in New York City and select counties to make it easier for eligible New Yorkers to apply for multiple food benefits online, as a first step toward doing so for all anti-poverty benefits in all counties.
- The Governor should appoint the new OTDA Commissioner to co-chair (along with the existing chair, the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets) the State Council on Hunger and Food Policy and empower it to create and implement a comprehensive plan for the State to fight hunger, improve nutrition, and aid NYS farmers and small-scale food processors.
- The Governor should create a permanent structure within the governor’s office – a state “Food Czar” – to coordinate these issues.
- Launch a statewide, multi-agency communications and outreach effort to enroll more eligible New Yorkers in federally funded nutrition assistance programs, including SNAP, WIC, P-EBT, school breakfasts, and summer meals. Could also combine this effort with vaccine outreach and/or rental assistance outreach.
- The Governor should direct the NYS Wage Board to end the sub-minimum wage for tipped food service workers.

- Propose SNAP-like program, to be funded by the State, to give extra grocery funds to immigrants and working poor New Yorkers who are ineligible for federal SNAP benefits. California recently started such a program: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2021-07-13/california-takes-a-nibble-at-offering-food-stamps-to-undocumented-immigrants>
- Propose free school lunch for all students, with state funds supplementing federal funds, as California also recently enacted: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2021-07-13/california-takes-a-nibble-at-offering-food-stamps-to-undocumented-immigrants>
- Further streamline and speed-up the State's contracting and payment procedures with anti-hunger and other non-profit groups working under State contracts.
- Enact a government-wide "Assets Empowerment/Middle Class Wealth Generation Agenda" to dramatically increase economic opportunity and mobility by enabling more families to transition from *owing* non-productive debt interest to *owning* assets such as first homes and small businesses.
- Accelerate the application to USDA, as well as the program roll-out, for the SNAP Restaurant Meals program recently signed into law by Governor Hochul. Work with nonprofit groups to conduct outreach to New Yorkers who are homeless, have disabilities, and are elderly to help enroll them in SNAP and use their benefits, if they choose to do so, at participating restaurants.
- Finalize and publicize easier SNAP applications, and shorter SNAP re-certification periods, for seniors.
- Increase State funding for nonprofits to conduct SNAP outreach through the NOEP program.
- Fight college student hunger by promoting college student SNAP enrollment, in close collaboration with SUNY and CUNY.
- Accelerate OTDA approval for nonprofits to use telephonic signatures for SNAP applications.
- Accelerate OTDA efforts to enable SNAP recipients to digitally redeem their SNAP benefits (through a system like Apple Wallet or Google Pay) instead of using EBT cards, which have more stigma and are often lost in the mail.
- Provide more technical assistance and equipment to farmers markets and individual farmers to help them accept SNAP and WIC online.

- Do more to promote gleaning on farms and food donations by farmers by providing farmers with more information (including details of legal liability protections) and technical assistance, and by using NYS Commission on National and Community Service to recruit volunteers for gleaning activities.
- Provide more technical assistance and funding to CSAs and discount produce box programs in low-income communities/neighborhoods.
- Merge the “Nourish NY” program with the DOH HPNAP program.
- Develop a neighborhood-level “food access index” that incorporates both food prices and physical availability of food.
- Better coordinate the varied SNAP/WIC incentives program that operate at farmers markets.
- Improve, and more carefully enforce, food labeling laws to make the true nutritional content of foods even clearer.
- Provide increased technical assistance and seed money for urban and suburban farms and gardens.
- Work with Cornell Cooperative Extension to better promote the New York State Grown & Certified program.
- Restore and increase state funding for the WIC Help NY program, which funds nonprofits to boost the enrollment of pregnant mothers and children under five in WIC. It is important to note that WIC is one of the few federal-funded food benefit programs legally available for undocumented immigrants.
- Provide technical assistance, funding, and policy support to WIC clinics to enable them to serve more families remotely by video and/or phone, instead of requiring them to come to WIC clinics in person to receive service.
- Boost State funding for the HPNAP program – which provides foods to food pantries, soup kitchens, and food banks statewide – and use some of that funding to ensure that all agencies receiving such food also engage in SNAP and WIC outreach work.
- Create a nutrition education smart phone app tied to market UPC codes for individual products. Perhaps Cornell Cooperative Extension could help with this .
- Expand nutrition education programs and make them more hand-on and culturally sensitive, using demonstrations with foods that are affordable and available in the neighborhoods where the nutrition education is provided.

- Include healthy food as an eligible expense in Medicaid in the current 1115 Waiver that is being discussed. California and a number of other states are already doing so in some form: <https://www.nycfoodpolicy.org/food-policy-snapshot-medically-tailored-meals-california-medicaid/>
- Increase participation statewide in federally-funded school breakfast programs by seriously enforcing – and providing technical assistance and limited funding to support implementation of – the recently enacted state law to require breakfast be served in first period classrooms. This would also help fight the pandemic by increasing the social distancing of students by preventing them from needing to go into cafeterias for breakfast.
- Provide more technical assistance to increase the participation of children in – and include more nonprofit groups to participate in the provision of — federally-funded summer meals. Enable more nonprofit soup kitchens to participate in this program.
- Provide more technical assistance to school districts, counties, cities, towns, villages, tribal governments and nonprofit groups to increase participation of children in federally funded after-school supper and after-school snack programs.
- Improve – and make more culturally sensitive – nutrition education curriculum used by schools statewide.
- Help more school districts, colleges, hospitals, and prisons purchase their food from NYS farmers and food processors.
- Mandate that schools serve breakfasts and lunches at reasonable hours.
- Direct more federal AmeriCorps national service funds under the State’s control to programs fighting hunger and improving nutrition.
- Promote the use of more skills-based, professional volunteers to aid hunger organizations.
- Fund a nonprofit group to develop a state anti-hunger service/volunteerism handbook.
- Finalize long-delayed program to provide federal funds to select nonprofit groups to hire displaced workers to fight hunger.
- When New Yorkers apply for unemployment compensation, inform them of their eligibility for SNAP and WIC.
- Launch a State “Good Jobs, Food Jobs” initiative by working together to provide more technical assistance and seed money to more food-related start-up

companies (especially those focused on food processing), and particularly those owned by women and people of color.

- Ensure that food-related enterprises are a principal component of every economic development and business expansion plan in the state.
- Work together with OTDA to provide technical assistance to restaurants to help them participate in the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program.
- Work together with OTDA to provide technical assistance to small food retailers to help them participate in the SNAP online purchasing program.
- Ensure that more food stores on college campuses accept SNAP and WIC benefits.
- Allocate funds in the State budget to support organizations providing technical assistance and support to beginning and established farmers, especially those from BIPOC communities. The financial investment in these organizations should support technical assistance for access to capital, farm succession and land transfer, financial planning, legal assistance, marketing, and mentorship. Additionally, more resources need to be set aside to support BIPOC and immigrant farmers.

Proposed New York City Public Policy Steps

- As Mayor, Eric Adams should quickly and fully implement his proposed “MyCity” online portal to make it easier for eligible New Yorkers to apply for multiple benefits and services online. Since many key programs are managed through State of New York computer systems, the City will need to work closely with the State to accomplish this goal.
- Give The Mayor's Office of Food Policy more authority, funding, and staff to plan and implement a comprehensive plan on hunger, food, and nutrition for the City.
- Create a City Hunger and Food Policy Council – to be comprised of City officials, nonprofit leaders, and food company representatives – and task it to work with the Mayor's Office of Food Policy chair, the Commissioner of AG and Markets, and the State Council on Hunger and Food Policy to create and implement a comprehensive plan for the State to fight hunger, improve nutrition, and aid local food producers and small-scale food processors.
- Launch a citywide, multi-agency communications and outreach effort – in partnership with nonprofit organizations (such as Hunger Free America) who are skilled in this area – to enroll more eligible New Yorkers in federally funded nutrition assistance programs, including SNAP, WIC, Pandemic-EBT, meals for

older New Yorkers, school breakfasts, and summer meals. Ensure adequate funding for nonprofit partners.

- Propose a SNAP-like program, to be funded by the City, to give extra grocery funds to immigrants and working poor New Yorkers who are ineligible for federal SNAP benefits. California recently started such a program: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2021-07-13/california-takes-a-nibble-at-offering-food-stamps-to-undocumented-immigrants>
- Streamline and speed-up the City contracting and payment procedures with anti-hunger and other non-profit groups working under State contracts.
- Enact a government-wide “Assets Empowerment/Middle Class Wealth Generation Agenda” to dramatically increase economic opportunity and mobility by enabling more families to transition from *owing* non-productive debt interest to *owning* assets such as first homes and small businesses.
- Work with the State of New York to accelerate the application to USDA, as well as the program roll-out, for the SNAP Restaurant Meals program recently signed into law by Governor Hochul. Work with nonprofit groups to conduct outreach to New Yorkers who are homeless, have disabilities, and are elderly to help enroll them in SNAP and use their benefits, if they choose to do so, at participating restaurants.
- Publicize easier SNAP applications and shorter SNAP re-certification periods for seniors.
- Fight college student hunger by promoting college student SNAP enrollment, in close collaboration with nonprofit groups and CUNY.
- Accelerate joint City and State approval for nonprofits to use telephonic signatures for SNAP applications.
- Work with the State to accelerate efforts that would enable SNAP recipients to digitally redeem their SNAP benefits (through a system like Apple Wallet or Google Pay) instead of using EBT cards which have more stigma and are often lost in the mail. Eric Adams has already championed the City doing so, calling it a “Cyber Wallet.”
- Provide more technical assistance and funding to food producing community gardens, urban farms, CSAs and discount produce box programs in low-income communities/neighborhoods.
- Develop a neighborhood-level “food access index” that incorporates both food prices and physical availability of food.

- Create a nutrition education smart phone app tied to market UPC codes for individual products. Perhaps Cornell Cooperative Extension could help with this.
- Expand nutrition education programs and make them more hands-on and culturally sensitive, using demonstrations with foods that are affordable and available in the neighborhoods where the nutrition education is provided.
- Purchase more New York State-grown fruits and vegetables for the City's schools, hospitals, and prisons.
- Dramatically expand school breakfast participation by making free, healthy meals available in the first period classrooms of all classes at all DOE schools.
- Mandate that all DOE schools serve breakfasts and lunches at reasonable hours.
- Provide more technical assistance to nonprofits to increase the participation of children in – and include more nonprofit groups to participate in the provision of—federally-funded summer meals. Enable more nonprofit soup kitchens to participate in this program.
- Launch a City “Good Jobs, Food Jobs” initiative to provide more technical assistance and seed money to more food-related start-up companies (especially those focused on food processing), and particularly those owned by women and people of color.

VIII.

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