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**Testimony to the
Joint Fiscal Committees on the SFY 2017–18 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 specifically, the initiatives proposed to address hunger in New York.

Hunger Solutions New York is a statewide anti-hunger organization dedicated to alleviating hunger for all New Yorkers. Our organization's primary approach to addressing hunger is to maximize participation in the federally-funded nutrition assistance programs, namely, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the School Breakfast Program, the Summer Food Service Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

We base our perspective on our 30 years of experience managing the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP). NOEP is one of the largest SNAP outreach, education and application assistance programs in the country. Full-time coordinators assist clients in 56 of 62 counties, providing SNAP application assistance, home visits, translation services and referrals to other nutrition assistance programs and to www.mybenefits.ny.gov. In FY15-16, NEOP Coordinators provided help to more than 33,000 households.

In addition, our organization consults with and provides resources to non-profit organizations, schools and other agencies to improve access to nutrition assistance programs across the state, and to help make their anti-hunger efforts more efficient and effective.

In 2015, according to the United States Department of Agriculture, 14.1% of New Yorkers faced food insecurity, meaning they lacked enough food to meet their family's nutritional needs. Nationally, only 59 percent of food insecure people reported receiving assistance from our nation's fundamental nutrition assistance programs. Approximately 1.5 million children living in this state qualify for free or reduced price school meals, and the [Food Research and Action Center \(FRAC\)](#)'s [Food Hardship in America: Households with Children Especially Hard Hit](#) report reveals that 21.4 percent of households with children suffer from food hardship in New York State. Clearly, hunger is a persistent and pervasive reality for many New Yorkers.

Governor Cuomo has proposed several initiatives in his 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal to address hunger. Some of the Governor's recommendations were identified by the Anti-Hunger Task Force, a group which, in 2014, put forth a broader set of intents and strategies as a result of its work. (Hunger Solutions New York served as a member of the Task Force.) We support the following proposals and urge the legislature to adopt these recommendations:

- **Level funding of \$3,024,000 for the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program**
 - This funding will enable NOEP to continue to connect low-income New Yorkers with SNAP. In 2016, New York drew down \$5 billion in federal funds through SNAP, dollars that were spent at local grocers and bodegas, farmers markets, and approved meal programs.
- **Level funding of \$250,000 for CACFP outreach and assistance**
 - 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 after-school programs. These funds are budgeted through the Office of Children and Family Services and allow for outreach and technical support to eligible child care providers. Currently, only 50% of eligible licensed day care and afterschool providers participate in CACFP.

While not part of the human services budget, these additional anti-hunger proposals are equally important components of a statewide approach to alleviating hunger:

- Make the **Home Energy Assistance Program** available year-round. That effort will, in turn, allow more families to receive the highest possible Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit in a timely manner to help them better afford food at times when high utility costs strain an already tight household budget.
- Expand the **Farm-to-School Grant Program** to ensure children in need are well nourished by school meals that contain fresh, local foods.
- Expand **FreshConnect Checks**, a key resource in helping SNAP recipients stretch food dollars at local farmers markets.
- Leverage additional federal funds for **expanded SNAP outreach** to help target the hardest-to-reach with specific, local strategies and education efforts.

With these recommendations, New York is poised to make more progress in its efforts to reduce hunger across the state. Hunger Solutions New York strongly urges the legislature to adopt these proposals in its final budget.