



TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK
Before the Joint Fiscal Committees of the New York State Legislature
Human Services Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2021-2022

Submitted by:
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February 9th, 2021

On behalf of UJA-Federation of New York, our network of nonprofit partners and those we serve, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the importance of maintaining and expanding support for the human services sector, particularly as our state is still fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. UJA's mission is to fight poverty, connect people to their communities and respond to crises both locally and around the world.

UJA supports a network of nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are the most vulnerable and in need of programs and services.

Supporting New York's Nonprofit Human Services Providers

Over the past eleven months, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically and disproportionately impacted the lives of all New Yorkers, particularly those living in poverty, further lifting-up the effects of systemic inequality and the real challenges New York State faces. In response to these needs, UJA's network of human services partners has been on the front lines since the pandemic hit, assisting New Yorkers of all backgrounds, throughout the five boroughs of New York City, Westchester, Nassau, and Suffolk counties. UJA's network provides a wide range of services, including emergency childcare, mental health supports, case management services, services for survivors of domestic violence, senior services, and access to food.

The pandemic has exacerbated fiscal challenges faced by human services nonprofits. Prior to the pandemic, providers balanced service provision with late reimbursement. Now, with the state's identified revenue shortfalls, these same organizations have gone without pay for more than a year while balancing increased costs associated with the pandemic: personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, emergency pay for essential workers, and technology enhancements to ensure continued service delivery.

To combat these additional costs, expanded investment in the nonprofit sector is needed and will allow for contracts that cover the real cost of providing services; appropriate, competitive compensation for the workforce, and investments in core programs that help bring communities from crisis to stability.

The state must make the following investments to respond to the needs of nonprofits and ensure stability in the sector:

- **Honor state contracts.** New York State must honor contracts and pay for services already delivered to residents and communities. All nonprofit contracts should be paid immediately, late contracts should be registered, and the 5% withholding on contracts suspended.

- **Recognize human services workers as essential workers.** New York State must recognize human services workers as essential workers and utilize a portion of any federal aid received to fund emergency pay for the services they provide to their communities.

Each of these investments will ensure New Yorkers can continue to receive services from the nonprofits in their communities they know and trust.

Services for Holocaust Survivors Living in Poverty

New York State is home to nearly 40,000 Holocaust survivors, 40 percent of whom are living in poverty. A survivor is an individual, Jewish or non-Jewish, who experienced persecution at the hands of the Nazi regime. They were targeted due to race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical or mental disabilities, as well as political ideology. They survived concentration camps or were forced to flee their homes and countries. Sixty-one percent of Holocaust survivors emigrated from the former Soviet Union before coming to the United States; they receive little-to-no Social Security income and are extremely poor.

As New York continues to support its immigrant communities and address the rise of anti-Semitism and hate crimes, it is imperative that we not leave Holocaust survivors behind. UJA thanks the Legislature for providing \$450,000 to support services for Holocaust survivors in FY 2020-2021, but more must be done. **We ask that the state invest \$2.5 million in FY2021-2022 to fund care, services and resources for Holocaust survivors living in poverty.**

Today, the youngest survivors are in their mid-70s, and as they age, they require even more care. The terrible trials and traumas they suffered in their earlier years show dire effects with age. While every year the number of Holocaust survivors decline, the cost of care significantly increases.

COVID-19 has been particularly painful for Holocaust survivors, many of whom already suffer from post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and other mental health complications, and the trauma Holocaust Survivors experience due to their childhoods is exacerbated by COVID-19. Survivors feel they are being locked up in their homes. They feel cut off from their social supports and lifelines. An increasing number of survivors are suffering from Alzheimer's and other dementias. Their family caregivers or professional home health aides cannot easily come to their houses. Many of them are experiencing the sudden loss of family and friends.

In the past 11 months, survivors have turned to mental health and social service providers more than ever to support their physical, emotional, and financial needs. Similarly, providers have had to quickly pivot to provide survivors with programming and resources that they can access from their homes, and make sure that they still feel the support of their communities.

An investment of \$2.5 Million will support COVID-compliant:

- **Case Management** to access benefits and support. Case Managers are specially trained in the psychological impact of the Holocaust.
- **Mental Health Services** including home visits to help survivors work through the traumas that now manifest in sleep disturbance, anxiety, depression and inability to trust
- **Trauma Informed Care** provided by professionals who recognize and avoid possible triggers, thereby reducing the potential for re-traumatization
- **Crisis Prevention** to help stave off eviction and hunger
- **Legal Services** and entitlement counseling

- **Emergency Financial Assistance** for food, housing, prescriptions, medical and dental care
- **Socialization Programs** to reduce isolation
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- **Training & Support** for Caregivers and home health aides working with survivors
- **End of Life Care** including hospice and ethical wills

New York must show its commitment to Holocaust survivors. As we continue to battle COVID-19, it is crucial to provide specialized care and support programs for survivors to enhance their quality of life and allow them to live out their remaining years with dignity. We ask that the 2021-2022 budget allocate \$2.5 million to support Holocaust survivors living in poverty throughout New York State.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities

UJA-Federation thanks the Legislature for supporting N/NORCs, particularly the program enhancements secured in FY 2020 and FY 2021. Because of your enthusiasm for this program, we have been able to bring resources and attention to the needs of a large and rapidly growing older adult population and the impact of the N/NORC program on their lives.

N/NORCs were established with the ultimate goal of transforming residential complexes and neighborhoods to meet the needs of a growing cohort of older residents and enable them to remain living independently in their homes; thrive in their communities, and delay hospitalization or nursing home placement. The density of older adults and their proximity to each other further fosters creative approaches to providing health and social services. N/NORC programs provide case management services, nursing services, recreational, social and cultural activities, and ancillary services tailored to meet the needs of each community. Programs actively encourage healthy aging by providing access to health care, promoting health and wellness activities, addressing disease prevention and responding to chronic health conditions.

A key component of the N/NORC program model is health care management and assistance, and most programs employ nurses to fulfill this requirement. Nurses provide services to N/NORC residents that might not otherwise exist in the community, such as medication education, diabetes testing, flu shots, mobility and balance screenings, and helping clients get in touch with doctors. Many residents rely on these services as a critical source of health care and value the consistent, quality care they provide.

Despite closing physical spaces to older adults and suspending in-person programming during COVID-19, N/NORC staff have continued to assist residents remotely throughout the pandemic. Staff provide frequent wellness calls to monitor health and safety and to reduce social isolation; case management services provided by N/NORCS continue to assist older adults in accessing food, medical supplies, in-home healthcare, and more. NORC nurses are providing remote support over the phone, particularly focusing around COVID-19 concerns. Other activities some NORCs report include posting flyers around communities to ensure people know about NORC services and events, creating a local information sharing system where residents can disseminate news to their peers, and providing virtual healthcare workshops run by the NORC nurse. In this remote environment, NORCs serve as essential services for older adults, helping them stay safe, healthy, and connected.

While the state faces a daunting \$15 billion budget shortfall from COVID-19, N/NORC programs continue to serve residents on relatively small budgets while helping defer more substantial costs to the State. For example, the average annual cost of a nursing home stay for one individual in New York State can be as high as \$142,000

per year¹; this amounts to nearly the value of an entire N/NORC program contract, generally serving hundreds of older adults and helping them remain in their homes. If the N/NORC were not there, that resident might require nursing home placement or increased visits to the emergency room, adding even more costs. Nursing homes can often be prohibitively expensive, as few individuals can afford to pay out of pocket for care. As a result, nursing home residents become reliant on State and Federal support and subsidies such as Medicaid. Investing in N/NORCs can help limit these increased costs to the Medicaid system.

N/NORCs were previously able to secure nursing hours pro-bono by partnering with hospitals, retired nurses, or supervised student nurses. However, in the wake of recent Medicaid Redesign and billing changes, in addition to an aging population with increased needs, these arrangements are becoming unstable and many nursing services providers have cut their pro-bono hours. With many of these partnerships greatly diminished or fully terminated, N/NORCs must find funding to pay for hours that were previously free, essentially spending more to maintain the same level of service.

A survey of N/NORCs statewide found that on average programs have experienced a 50% reduction in pro-bono nursing hours from 2015-2018. In addition, the largest provider of N/NORC nursing eliminated their pro-bono hours in July 2019. An additional \$1 million would sufficiently cover these losses across all SOFA-funded N/NORC programs. It is critical that this money not impact unit of service requirements.

The Executive Budget Proposal includes \$8.06 million for N/NORC programs. This funding is vital to ensure that State funded N/NORCs can continue to provide services. In FY 2019-2020, the Legislature added \$325,000 to address the nursing challenge. However, this investment was not included in the Executive Budget proposal this year. **We ask that the Legislature add \$1 million to the FY 2021-2022 Executive Budget proposal of \$8.06 million for N/NORCs, for a total of \$9.055 million.** This will provide stable funding for N/NORC programs that have struggled with the loss in pro-bono nursing services over the last several years.

Address Waitlists for Home Delivered Meals and Older Adult Services

There are more than 11,500 older adults on waiting lists for State Office for the Aging (SOFA) community-based services. These services include home-delivered meals, case management, home care and transportation. COVID-19 has lifted-up the need for these services, which help enable seniors across the state to age safely and independently in their communities, avoiding unwanted moves to costlier institutional care settings.

An initial investment of \$10 million is needed in FY2021-2022 to begin to address this need; a multi-year of \$27 million is needed overall.

Older New Yorkers are significantly impacted by isolation, mental health challenges, food insecurity and stress brought on by COVID-19, but these services were underfunded before the pandemic. Given the exorbitant strain that the pandemic has placed on older adults, it is imperative that the state invest in this vulnerable population. For many older adults, it is only through the delivery of a daily hot meal, a visit from a home care attendant to assist with activities of daily living, or the support and referrals from a case manager, that one is able to live fully and safely in community.

Further, by investing in these supports, New York will not only be ensuring an improved quality of life to those in need but will inevitably help address some of the state's budget challenges by reducing Medicaid

¹ NYS Department of Financial Services: https://www.dfs.ny.gov/consumer/ltc/ltc_about_cost.htm

expenditures. For example, findings indicate that for every 1% increase in home-delivered meal service to the older adult population, there is a significant savings to Medicaid through the reduction of higher cost care. More specifically, a study indicates that in New York, savings from just a 1% increase in meal service would lead to \$11,427,143 Medicaid savings—showing that waiting lists for such services actually cost more than the cost of the meal service itself.²

SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program)

UJA-Federation appreciates the Executive’s proposal to fund SYEP at \$45 million. In 2019, New York City received \$22.6 million from the state for their SYEP. In 2020, due to the pandemic, the NYC SYEP transitioned to a different version of the SYEP called the Summer Bridge program. The Summer Bridge program was a remote career exploration and education program that provided participants a stipend for participating. Unfortunately, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) did not approve the Summer Bridge program to receive state SYEP funding citing issues with participants receiving a stipend, not an hourly wage as well as disagreeing a “meaningful work experience” was going to be offered through the program. For the summer of 2021, the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development has committed to providing in-person and virtual work experiences to SYEP participants, reverting back to hourly wages for older youth enrolled in the program. Because of this commitment, UJA believes this will qualify NYC to receive funds for their SYEP in summer 2021. **UJA urges OTDA to maintain their investment of \$22.6 million in the NYC SYEP in summer 2021.**

Since September 2019, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has required new extensive background checks for staff and volunteers working in School-Age Childcare (SACC) licensed programs. SACC licensed programs include (but are not limited to) SYEP and after school programs. The background checks are required by rules in the Federal Childcare and Community Development Block Grant that was reauthorized and revised in 2014. While UJA supports rigorous background checks to help ensure the safety of children and youth, the rollout of this process, particularly in New York City which has an extensive SACC-licensed program system, continues to be challenging.

As the local regulator, the background check process is managed in New York City by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). Throughout the pandemic, DOHMH has continued to struggle to complete the background checks in a timely manner causing delays in the hiring process for staff members in SACC licensed programs. When providers send inquiries about the status of pending background checks to the DOHMH mailbox designated for receiving completed background check paperwork they often receive delayed responses with little information. Programs have reported having to wait a minimum of *two months* to get staff fully cleared. OCFS allows prospective staff to work in programs if they are supervised by fully cleared staff. However, this only works when there are enough cleared staff to oversee the prospective staff awaiting their clearances. When fully cleared staff test positive for COVID and need to quarantine, many programs are left scrambling to meet staffing quotas.

The delays in completing background checks are unacceptable at a time when parents and guardians’ ability to return to work hinges on the availability of reliable childcare options. Additionally, the SYEP is a six-week program, making the current waiting period for background check approvals untenable. Youth over the age of 18 participating in the SYEP, as well as the staff who oversee the program, will both be required to complete and clear the comprehensive background check process before they can work. If these individuals must wait two months for their clearance packets to be processed and cleared, they will miss the entirety of the SYEP.

Before the new regulations were in place providers waited approximately two weeks for completed background checks. Due to the complexity of the new background checks, OCFS and the local registrars at the county level

² <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2013.0390>

(like the New York City DOHMH) who oversee this process require additional resources and staff to be able to perform the background checks in a timely manner. Providers of SACC licensed programs also require more guidance on the background check process. Specifically, if the process is not expedited before hiring for summer programs begins, OCFS must provide communication to SACC licensed summer programs, like the SYEP, that acknowledges the backlogs in the comprehensive background check system and provides guidance on how to properly staff their programs while waiting for the completion of the comprehensive background checks.

After School Programs

Three of UJA's nonprofit partners receive funding through Advantage After School. Using this funding they provide after school programming for youth in areas not covered by the Empire State After School initiative. One of UJA's nonprofit partners also receives funding through the Empire State After School initiative. Since the beginning of the pandemic, children and youth have experienced high rates of trauma due to the impact of COVID on their communities. This impact has been felt harder in low income communities where children and youth attend after school programs funded by the Advantage After School and Empire State After School Initiatives. After school programs have helped children, youth and their families during this difficult time by expanding learning opportunities for students engaging in virtual learning and offering a safe place for children and youth when their parents and guardians are at work. After school programs are essential for families as New York State moves towards recovering from the pandemic.

The Executive Budget funded the Advantage After School program at \$28.041 million, a \$5 million decrease from the 2020-2021 Enacted Budget. **UJA urges the Legislature to restore \$5 million to the Advantage After School program.** If this funding is not restored, between 2,500 and 5,000 children and youth across New York State will lose access to after school programs. UJA appreciates the inclusion of \$55 million for the Empire State After School program in the Executive's proposal. This investment funds programs for youth living in school districts with high poverty and student homelessness rates.

The Youth Development Program (YDP) allows counties to determine programming that will best meet their local needs. In New York City, the YDP partially funds COMPASS and SONYC after school programs. It was funded at \$13.4 million in the Executive Budget, \$2.2 million less than it was funded in the FY20-21 Enacted budget. **UJA urges the Legislature to fund this program at \$15.6 million.**

Child Care

The pandemic highlighted the need for families to have access to safe, affordable and reliable child care as well as the financial struggles New York's child care sector had been experiencing for years. During the pandemic, low-income families specifically struggled to maintain care for their families forcing them to choose between working and providing care for their children. Without child care, parents and guardians are unable to work effectively while at home or are unable to participate in work outside their homes. According to the Empire State Campaign for Child Care, the child care sector who often struggles to cover costs when their programs are enrolled at 100% have been averaging 40% capacity since March. More than 60% have been losing money each month during the pandemic while 60% of the sector has also reported having to take on personal debt or use personal savings to keep their doors open. This is not a sustainable way to operate a business and if additional support is not provided to the child care sector soon, there will be less providers able to provide care in the present and post-pandemic. Any pandemic recovery plan is inadequate if it does not address how to support families who need child care and the providers who oversee child care services in New York State.

The Executive Budget included no new investments for child care. A plan has also not been developed to invest the \$450 million in CARES Act federal relief dollars earmarked to rebuild the child care sector and support working families. The sector is also waiting for the recommendations from the Governor's Child Care Availability Task Force. The Task Force met in 2018 and was required by statute to release recommendations in December 2020. These recommendations will detail a plan on how to make child care accessible to all New York Families and will be a vital tool to use to help the child care sector recover from the pandemic.

UJA urges the Governor to release the Child Care Availability Task Force recommendations and draw from the \$450 million in federal child care relief funds New York has already received to immediately begin to implement the Task Force recommendations. UJA urges the Governor and Legislature to fully incorporate the Task Force's recommendations in the Adopted Budget, and include the following increased investments in child care:

- Provide counties with \$370 million to make the child care subsidy system more equitable by eliminating eligibility variations across counties and communities;
- Commit to eliminating expulsions and suspensions in child care and Pre-K by setting a statewide prohibition on suspensions and expulsions (in most cases) while investing \$15 million to infant-toddler resources centers to provide child care and pre-k programs the supports they need to meet the developmental, mental health, and social-emotional needs of all the children in their care;
- Invest \$100 million to create a fund to increase workforce compensation to a fair wage and improve child care quality.

By making these additional investments in child care in the FY22 budget, New York State can extend child care subsidies to 30,000 additional children each month, lower the cost of care among families receiving support, and boost child care worker wages.

Preventive Services

New York State's child welfare system provides preventive services to families to prevent placing children into foster care. The state committed to strengthening preventive services through the provision of open-ended reimbursement to counties. However, for several years, the state budget has reduced the state share for prevention services to 62%, even though there is a statutory requirement of 65%, leaving counties to increase their expenditures to simply maintain a flat level of program funding. **To combat this, UJA urges the Legislature to maintain the open-ended state commitment to funding for preventive services at 62% and to restore Community Optional Preventive Services (COPS) funding, which was eliminated in the Executive Budget proposal.**

Foster Care-Maximum State Aid Rate

The Maximum State Aid Rate (MSAR) supports expenses related to the care of New York's children in foster care, including the salaries of direct care and clinical staff. The MSAR is developed and approved after the state budget is adopted and passed. Although due on July 1st, the rate is not automatically increased each year. Annual increases to the MSAR cover the increasing costs of providing services to children in foster care. Foster care agencies are still waiting for their MSAR that was due to them on July 1st, 2020. The pandemic has created additional costs for foster care agencies (for example buying PPE and securing additional technology for staff to work from home). The delayed MSAR release is causing foster care agencies to figure out how to support children with less money-during a year that has already brought many financial challenges. **UJA urges the state to issue Maximum State Aid Rates on July 1st and increase the rate annually, so agencies can cover**

the increasing costs of operating their programs. Salary increases for foster care direct care and clinical staff should also be included in the MSAR so they receive the same salary increases the state provides for direct care workers in OMH, OASAS and OPWDD program. Lastly, UJA urges the state to ensure providers do not experience any punitive impacts to rates due to any federal COVID-19 aid they may have received to support costs associated with the pandemic.

Providing a Career Pathway for the State's Child Welfare Workforce

Thank you for continuing to support the child welfare workforce in the Executive Budget by including \$50,000 each for the NYS Child Welfare Worker Incentive Scholarship and the NYS Child Welfare Worker Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program. These programs will help the child welfare workforce in supporting their higher education goals. Child welfare agencies continue to struggle with recruitment and retention of staff. In 2016, the average statewide starting salary for a caseworker/case planner working in a preventive, family foster care, or residential care program began at \$34,753 (for a BA/BS graduate) or \$41,570 (for an LMSW). The average annual statewide salary is \$37,858 (for a BA/BS graduate) or \$45,354 (for an LMSW). The salaries agencies are able to pay are simply not enough to compete with what the public sector can pay, as well as the benefits that are offered. Agencies report losing caseworkers to public schools, hospitals, and Managed Care Organizations. Programs all too often act as a "training ground" for employees, as they receive excellent training and experience in trauma-informed approaches that then make them marketable to other organizations. This constant churn of worker turnover causes longer lengths of stay for children in foster care.

In addition to salary increases, child welfare staff also report needing support in achieving their higher education goals. Many staff members working in child welfare programs struggle each month to pay their student loan bills, often amounting to several hundred dollars—comparable to a rent or mortgage payment. UJA believes that increased state investment into the child welfare workforce's higher education pursuits will not only assist in staff recruitment and retention efforts but will also create the next generation of child welfare leaders in the field. UJA supports the Executive Budget's inclusion of \$50,000 each for the NYS Child Welfare Worker Incentive Scholarship and for the NYS Child Welfare Worker Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program. UJA requests the state continues to invest in the child welfare workforce in New York State to help non-profit agencies who oversee child welfare services recruit and maintain staff in their agencies.

Adult Literacy Education (ALE)

ALE funds English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE) and High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation classes and is one of the few state funding streams able to address the needs of lower-level learners. In New York State, there are over 3.5 million individuals who lack their high school diploma, English language proficiency, or both. There are 15,000 New York City residents on a waitlist for adult literacy classes.

However, the Governor's Executive Budget Proposal cuts the addition \$1.5 million added by the Legislature in the FY2019-20 Enacted Budget, funding ALE at \$6.3 million. UJA respectfully requests support for the restoration of \$1.5 million and the investment of an additional \$17.2 million in ALE programs. This additional investment would raise ALE funding to \$25 million and would allow the State to serve an additional 10,000 learners.

Limited skills make it difficult for individuals to support their children in school, access health care, secure and maintain living-wage jobs, advocate for their rights as workers, and fully participate in the political process. Many of these adults are currently on the frontlines of the pandemic, performing essential work that is

sustaining our communities. Some are the grocery store workers, delivery workers, and home care workers risking their lives to maintain their livelihoods and to care for us all. Others are the restaurant workers, salon workers, and domestic workers who have lost their jobs and incomes and face a harsh reality with little or no safety net. Adult literacy education – and the additional support services that adult literacy programs provide – will play a vital role in helping to stabilize the lives of many of our most essential New Yorkers.

Over the past year, adult literacy programs have quickly and effectively pivoted to remote learning and support for their students, adapting class activities, providing information on the rapidly changing health crisis, and transforming programming to ensure that adult learners do not get left behind. Using online platforms like Zoom and Google Classroom, students are continuing to build their reading, writing, and math skills, preparing for their high school equivalency exams, and increasing their English conversational skills. Parents are being supported by their programs to take on a greater role in the education of their school-aged children, a role that has become critical during these times. The educational gains made over this time could prepare these adults to help restart the economy and ensure greater security for themselves and their families, rather than leaving them even more vulnerable and marginalized.

Addressing Food Insecurity

Food access is a growing concern among New Yorkers. Stay-at-home orders and social distancing measures have cut off reliable pathways to food access, such as meals provided in community settings (houses of worship, senior centers) and schools. As a result of the pandemic and the ensuing economic downturn, rates of food insecurity have almost doubled in New York State, from 10.5 percent to 22.9 percent. As rates of food insecurity increase and New Yorkers are relying more on food pantries, these pantries are unable to fully respond to the need. According to a survey conducted by Hunger Free America, almost 15 percent of food pantry and soup kitchen respondents in NYS reported having to turn people away, reduce the amount of food distributed per person or limit their hours of operation because they lacked resources. Additionally, 70.4 percent of respondents reported an increase in people served since the start of the pandemic.

Although UJA's nonprofit partners quickly shifted their operations to better support New York's emergency food efforts by expanding their food pantry operations; helping clients gain access to SNAP and other benefits and raising private dollars to deliver meals to homebound older adults, there is still tremendous unmet need. UJA-Federation submits the following recommendations to ensure that the local food system and supply chain remains intact, that all families are able to access the food and support they need, and that front line community-based organizations (CBOs) can respond effectively to this crisis:

- 1) Increase funding for the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) by \$16 million for a total of \$51 million to adjust for rising food costs and increased need.
 - a. HPNAP provides supplemental food which is distributed through the NYS Emergency Food Program (EFP) network of over three thousand soup kitchens, shelters and pantries. These organizations provide over 200 million meals a year to low-income people across the state. Even as food insecurity has increased and pantries are seeing an increase in the number of visitors, HPNAP has remained flat funded. Furthermore, the current funding amount, as is, does not meet the standards established by the state, which requires that pantries distribute a total of nine meals per guest (three meals a day for three days). To ensure the program meets its nine meals standard, account for an increase in food prices and work towards meeting the increased need, UJA urges the legislature to fund HPNAP at \$51 million.
- 2) Maintain the Executive Budget proposal to increase funding for the Nourish NY program by \$25 million for a total investment of \$60 million.

- a. The Nourish NY program connects food banks to New York’s food manufacturers and famers directly, not only benefiting food insecure families but also providing an economic benefit to the communities where this food is coming from. As of December 2020, Nourish NY has funded the purchase of 17 million pounds of food, benefitting over one million households and four thousand farms, serving as a lifeline for New York’s farmers and families left struggling due to the pandemic. UJA urges the legislature to maintain the Executive Budget proposal to increase funding for this program by \$25 million to ensure stability for farmers and food banks, as well as the continued support of New York’s food insecure families.
- 3) Maintain funding for the Nutrition Education and Outreach Program (NOEP)
- a. Many New Yorkers are unaware of, or hesitate to apply to, the nutrition assistance programs for which they may be eligible. They may also be unaware of the benefits to which they are entitled. NOEP offers free and confidential services to connect New Yorkers to food assistance programs including SNAP and school meals. Through a NOEP coordinator, a family receives guidance throughout the application process to the endpoint of receiving the benefits. As more New Yorkers qualify for federal nutrition programs as a result of the pandemic, it is important that the funding for NOEP is maintained so that can work to ensure that all qualifying New Yorkers access the benefits they need. SNAP is not only the first line of defense against hunger but also has the potential to generate economic activity - in a weak economy, \$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.70 in economic activity. UJA urges the legislature to continue to fund NOEP so that participation is maximized in these vital nutrition assistance programs.

Conclusion

UJA-Federation of New York respectfully urges your consideration and support of these vital programs that assist our state’s most vulnerable and neediest individuals and the organizations that serve them. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact Faith Behum at behumf@ujafedny.org or 212-836-1338 with any questions.