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January 23, 2024

Submission for New York State Budget testimony:

Dutchess Outreach has served the community of Dutchess County for 50 years and never before experienced the level of utilization we are seeing today. Our community meal program went from preparing 200 meals a day, to the maximum capacity of 749! Our self-choice food pantry has seen a 500% increase in utilization since 2021 with an average of over 1,300 households per month coming to shop for food. Each month the numbers of people coming to us for food continues to rise without a sign of slowing down. This has placed an enormous strain on every aspect of our operations including refrigeration, staffing, facilities and food procurement.

We implore New York State to fund HPNAP at \$75 million, funding Nourish NY at \$75 million, and continue direct contracts with all types of Emergency Food Relief Programs (EFRPs). Funding these initiatives ensures that more people have the ability to access food. Direct contracts with EFRP's allows each local community to support its local food system (supporting local farms) while also ensuring that pantries and community meal programs can procure the food that is culturally relevant to their own communities.

Sincerely,



Renee Fillette Miccio, PhD
Executive Director

