

The Joint Legislative Budget Hearing-Health
Testimony of The Food Pantries for the Capital District
Angela Pender-Fox, Associate Executive Director
January 26, 2025

Dear Senators and Assemblymembers of the Joint Budget Hearing on Health,

I am writing to you on behalf of The Food Pantries for the Capital District, to ask for your support in addressing food and nutrition insecurity in New York State in the upcoming budget. Specifically, we are asking for your support in ensuring that the Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program **(HPNAP) is funded at \$75 million, Nourish New York is funded at \$75 million**, and that you work to secure the 40-year-old precedent of supporting food pantries, food rescues, and meals programs, in addition to food banks with any increases to these programs.

Founded in 1979, The Food Pantries for the Capital District is a coalition of more than 70 food pantries serving Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady and Saratoga counties. As a coalition we continue to experience record high service levels. To put this in perspective, we have seen a 52% increase in individuals visiting our pantries from 2023 to 2024. Our Information and Referral team have provided nearly 11,500 referrals. This service has more than quadrupled since 2019 and is the highest in our organization's history!

This is shocking but not uncommon when we look at the services being provided by food pantries and direct providers across our state.

The continued increase in need as well as the dramatic rise in food inflation from 2019 (25%) puts a tremendous amount of pressure on our direct providers. One that they continue to struggle to meet. The Governor's premise for her State of the State is "Fighting for Your Family". Each and everyday parents, caregivers, guardians and direct providers are doing just that, fighting for their families, fighting for our families!

Struggling to ensure that food pantries are stocked, refrigerators are full and that families have the food they need to nourish bodies and souls.

Food pantries need direct support to provide culturally appropriate, nutritious food with proper staffing and operations. Putting the funding directly into local communities' better addresses needs and builds a stronger, more reliable food supply chain.

We do not do this work alone. We're asking for this funding because we are part of a coalition of frontline community food providers (food pantries, community meals programs, etc.). We participate in The Alliance for a Hunger Free New York because we know that we can do more together than any one of us can do alone.

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."...Barack Obama

We thank you for your leadership and support on this critical issue. We are hopeful that you will stand with us and be the change that is needed to ensure that all New Yorkers have the food and nutrition they need to not just survive, but thrive.

Respectfully submitted by,

Angie Pender-Fox

Associate Executive Director, The Food Pantries for the Capital District