



Schenectady County Food Council

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

We are writing you on behalf of the Schenectady County Food Council Advocacy & Empowerment Working Group. We 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**, that you work to **secure the 40-yearlong precedent of supporting food pantries, food rescues, meals programs**, in addition to food banks with any increases to these programs, and that you work to secure a \$100 minimum benefit for SNAP.

Schenectady County Food Council Advocacy & Empowerment Working Group works to create systemic change across all levels of government, with a focus on amplifying the voices of individuals who have experienced nutrition insecurity.

New York State is experiencing an increase in food insecurity. This year the USDA ERS report released that 1 in 8 New York households are experiencing food insecurity. That is an increase from 1 in 10 in the year prior.

Inconjunction with the dramatic 25% rise of food inflation from 2019, the pressure on direct providers to meet these needs is immense. Not only is it more expensive for families to shop at the grocery store, it's more expensive to keep pantry shelves stocked with healthy, nutritious food.

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.

Additionally, 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.

In one of the richest states in the richest country in the history of the world, no one should lack access to healthy and culturally appropriate food. Fully funding HPNAP and Nourish NY at \$75 million each, allowing for direct contracts with direct providers, and securing a \$100 minimum benefit for SNAP will greatly assist our communities in solving the worst food affordability crisis since the Great Depression.

We appreciate your leadership and are grateful for your support.

Submitted by:

Rev. Dustin Longmire, Pastor, Messiah Lutheran Church & Co-Chair of The Schenectady County Food Council Advocacy and Empowerment Working Group



Proud member of The Alliance for a Hunger Free New York

www.alliancehungerfreeny.org/