



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

I am writing to you on behalf of my organization, Tompkins County Food Distribution Network (TCFDN), 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 long precedent of supporting food pantries, food rescues, meals programs**, in addition to food banks with any increases to these programs.

New York State is experiencing an increase in food insecurity. The USDA ERS report released that 1 in 8 New Yorkers are experiencing food insecurity this year. That is an increase from 1 in 10 in the year prior. In conjunction with the dramatic rise of food inflation in 2019, the pressure on direct providers to meet these needs is immense.

Looking at all our programs and agencies in Tompkins County, the number of individual requests for Quarter 1 in 2024 is **up 111% compared to 2019**. Across New York State, the food pantry network has seen a 70% increase in service since 2019.

The need for emergency food programs has grown at an unprecedented rate. Families, children, seniors, and individuals across New York rely on food pantries, meal sites, school food centers, and other emergency food services to put meals on their tables. I've seen this reality firsthand in my work across Tompkins and Cortland counties. Lines are longer, shelves are emptier, and budgets are stretched thinner than ever before.

Both programs are critical to fight hunger with compassion, action, and accountability. HPNAP serves as part of the backbone of hunger relief in New York. Nourish NY has created vital connections between our farmers and food pantries.

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.

Lastly, we must address the **limitations of SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. A minimum benefit of \$100** is not just reasonable, it's necessary. This simple step can provide a more stable foundation for households already teetering on the edge of food insecurity.

We cannot meet today's challenges with yesterday's resources. We appreciate your leadership and are grateful for your support.

Submitted by:

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