



Joint Legislative Budget Hearing-Health
Testimony of The Food Pantries for the Capital District
Angela Pender-Fox, Associate Executive Director
January 23, 2026

"Access to food is a human right. Without food there is no life, health, dignity or hope. All people are entitled to reliable access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food for healthy growth and development". *United Nations(UN)*

On behalf of The Food Pantries for the Capital District, I am writing 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 and Nourish New York is funded at \$75 million.**

Founded in 1979, The Food Pantries for the Capital District is a coalition of 75 food pantries serving Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady, and Saratoga counties. Our network is currently navigating a prolonged crisis. Since 2019, the New York pantry network has experienced a 70% increase in service. Locally, our coalition saw a 42% increase in utilization in 2024 compared to 2023, and 2025 data indicates an additional 5% rise.

Behind these statistics are the residents of our communities—parents, grandparents, and children. Every day we hear from community members struggling to provide for their families. Our members are reporting an increase in NEW pantry visitors, including middle class families, who for the first time, cannot keep pace with the 39% increase in food inflation observed between 2019 and 2025. This economic pressure severely affects New York State families and the food pantries that serve them.

The emergency food system has transitioned from a temporary safety net into a permanent pillar of support for New York families, sustaining them through unprecedented challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent SNAP benefit crisis. These services are no longer just supplemental; they are essential for the basic survival of our neighbors.

To address this sustained and growing demand, New York must fully invest in a resilient, robust food infrastructure. Both the Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) and Nourish

New York (NNY) are cornerstones of this system. These programs provide the necessary foundation for pantries to maintain consistent inventory and reliably serve our communities. Furthermore, Nourish New York creates a vital economic link by directly supporting our state's farmers and producers, ensuring that nutritious, locally grown food strengthens both our residents' health and our regional agricultural economy.

We remain grateful for your dedication to these vital programs. Investing in the health of our communities by ensuring reliable access to nutritious food is a shared priority that benefits all New Yorkers.

Submitted by:

Angie Pender-Fox
Associate Executive Director
The Food Pantries for the Capital District