

Joint Legislative Budget Hearing—Health

Written Testimony of Feeding New York State Kathleen Stress, Interim Executive Director February 6, 2026

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Feeding New York State, the statewide association representing our members, New York's 10 food banks. Our food banks partner with more than 3,000 food pantries, emergency shelters, community kitchens, and community-based organizations that work directly on the frontlines of hunger across the state. Feeding New York State's mission is to lead a unified effort to end hunger, and we are honored to advance that mission on behalf of our members and the communities they serve.

We appreciate Governor Hochul's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget, which outlines meaningful strategies to combat food insecurity statewide. The proposed \$72.8 million investment in the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) is critical to helping our network address the persistent and growing need in our communities. We also recognize and value the Governor's continued \$55 million investment in Nourish NY. In addition, we commend the proposed funding for NY PLATES, which will serve as an important complementary initiative to strengthen capacity across New York's food banks and pantries. Finally, we are grateful for the Governor's proposal to transition to EBT chip cards to prevent SNAP theft, as well as her efforts to expand access to summer nutrition programs.

Despite these steps forward, more is needed to combat food insecurity across our state. More than [2.8 million New Yorkers](#) live with food insecurity and around [60% of households](#) live paycheck to paycheck. This hardship is reflected in food distribution lines, with our network reporting that they serve over 70% more households and individuals compared to before the COVID-19 Pandemic, with utilization continuing to rise year over year.

Recent unprecedented federal cuts to SNAP and Medicaid will exacerbate food insecurity in New York. Even if our state does everything in its power to mitigate the SNAP impacts stemming from H.R.1, hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers will risk losing partial or complete SNAP benefits—leading to more families turning to food banks and food pantries to help make ends meet.

Fund HPNAP and Nourish New York at \$75 Million Each

The Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP)

Founded in 1984, HPNAP provides funds to purchase and distribute nutritious food across our network, supporting 425 million meals annually. In addition to providing essential funding for high quality, wholesome food, HPNAP also provides funding for capital and operational costs including food safety equipment, staffing, and utilities—ensuring our network can effectively store and distribute food.

Nourish New York

Founded in 2020, Nourish New York provides funding for emergency food providers to distribute healthy, fresh produce and dairy out to communities, doing so through direct purchases from New York-based farmers, producers, and food vendors. Since its launch, the program has supported over 4,000 New York-based producers and vendors with more than \$260 million in purchases, strengthening local economies while addressing food insecurity statewide.

Both Programs Must Be Fully Funded

HPNAP and Nourish New York are vital programs, supporting a network which serves as the last line of defense when people simply cannot make ends meet. In Feeding New York State's 2025 survey of our network, 90% of food relief organizations reported that HPNAP and Nourish New York accounted for most of the food provided to their communities. Food providers describe these hunger relief programs as a lifeline, allowing them to get good-quality staples in a cost-effective way, ensuring that they have the resources needed to get food out to their communities. Many indicated that they could not distribute food without this funding. As need continues to rise, funding HPNAP and Nourish New York at \$75 million each are a critical step to meet the growing need for food in our communities.

Fund Additional Anti-Hunger Programs

Additionally, we recognize the need to invest directly in New Yorkers through programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP), New York's network of SNAP navigators, will play a critical role in helping New Yorkers access and maintain SNAP benefits amid federal policy changes, but without additional state investment to backfill federal cuts, many communities will lose SNAP navigators when they are needed most. We urge the Legislature to fund NOEP at \$8.5M to sustain access to SNAP navigators statewide. We also ask the Legislature to provide \$30M in supplemental WIC funding to ensure local agencies can serve all eligible families seeking services and reach more of the approximately 200,000 eligible but unenrolled New Yorkers. New York can also build on successful programs, including by increasing the minimum SNAP benefit, extending food benefits to families who are excluded from SNAP solely due to immigration status, and expanding Double Up Food Bucks. Together, these investments will support food security, health, and affordability for New Yorkers.

Conclusion

As food insecurity continues to affect families in every region of our state, sustained and strategic investment in proven hunger-relief programs is essential. Programs like HPNAP and Nourish New York—along with other coordinated, statewide anti-hunger initiatives—are critical tools to ensure that children, seniors, and working families have reliable access to nutritious food. These investments are not optional; they are necessary to stabilize communities, strengthen local food systems, and prevent hunger before it escalates into crisis.

We thank New York State for its continued partnership in addressing food insecurity and for recognizing hunger relief as a shared responsibility. We are grateful to the Health Committee for the opportunity to add our voice in support of these vital initiatives. We urge the Legislature to reflect this shared commitment by fully funding HPNAP, Nourish New York, and complementary anti-hunger programs in the Fiscal Year 2027 New York State Budget.