



Testimony of City Harvest Before the New York State Assembly & Senate Committee on Health/Medicaid

Joint Legislative Public Hearing on NYS FY2027 Executive Budget February 10, 2026

Thank you, Chairwoman Amy Paulin and Chairman Gustavo Rivera, and members of the Health Committee for holding today's hearing on the Governor's FY2027 Executive Budget. My name is Jerome Nathaniel, and I am the Director of Policy and Government Relations at City Harvest, New York's first and largest food rescue organization.

For more than 40 years, City Harvest has worked in partnership with a network of over 400 food pantries, soup kitchens, and community programs to help feed New Yorkers facing hunger. This year, we are on pace to deliver over 86 million pounds of food for over 1.3 million New Yorkers experiencing food insecurity, with a special focus on fresh produce and culturally responsive food.

We thank our local policy makers for being strong partners in our efforts to fight hunger over the years, including investments that have enabled us to significantly increase our local food procurement. However, we are now facing both a historic rise in demand for emergency food and historic federal cuts to SNAP. This year's budget is far from business as usual; our challenges require historic and bold investments in local food security programs. **Washington has stepped back on hunger relief. Now New York must step up.**

Today we are advocating for the following FY27 New York State budget investments:

1. **Increase combined funding for Nourish New York and the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) from \$112.5 million to \$150 million.**
2. **Invest \$30 million in SNAP-Ed**
3. **Restore \$8.5 million for Nutrition Outreach and Education Program**
4. **Invest in FY27 budget solutions that make life more affordable for New Yorkers**

The Crisis Before Us: Unprecedented Need, Worsening Conditions

Even before the most recent federal cuts to SNAP enacted through H.R.1, food insecurity in New York City was already at historic highs. In Fiscal Year 2025, food pantry visits reached 47 million, an 87 percent increase compared to 2019, representing more than 25 million additional visits. This data, collected monthly through emergency food providers citywide, reflects what our frontline partners see every day: longer lines, first-time visitors, and families who have never needed help before.

Now, food security and the emergency food system are under far greater pressure. H.R.1 slashed \$186 billion from SNAP nationwide¹, placing an estimated 409 million meals at risk for New Yorkers alone and potentially costing New York State more than \$1.2 billion annually². These cuts disproportionately impact veterans, aging adults, people exiting foster care, people with disabilities, families with teenage children, and working families who are already stretched thin.

Even with the strongest possible state-level mitigation, hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers are likely to lose SNAP benefits entirely or see them reduced, forcing more families to turn to food pantries and food banks.

Our recent survey of food pantry leaders across New York City underscores the urgency:

- 92 percent report higher demand
- 83 percent report being directly impacted by federal cuts

¹ <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/snap-cuts-one-big-beautiful-bill-act-leave-almost-3-million-young-adults-vulnerable>

² <https://hungersolutionsny.org/resources-action/policy-and-advocacy/snap-changes-hr1/>

- More than half say they cannot operate without HPNAP and Nourish New York funding

The message from communities is unmistakable: the emergency food system is being asked to do more than ever, with fewer federal resources to rely on.

HPNAP & Nourish New York: The Backbone of NYS' Emergency Food System

The Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) and Nourish New York are the backbone of New York State's emergency food network. These programs are not optional but are rather essential infrastructure that allows food banks and community-based organizations to source, store, transport, and distribute nutritious local food safely and efficiently.

Together, these programs support a system that serves nearly 2.8 million New Yorkers facing hunger statewide³. Yet the current combined funding level of \$112.5 million falls far short of what is needed to meet today's reality. We thank the governor for including an increase in HPNAP from \$56.5 million to \$71.7 million⁴, bringing us closer to our goal of \$75 million for each program and closing the gap for the state legislative add to right size the program.

City Harvest urges the Legislature to go all the way by increasing combined funding for HPNAP and Nourish New York to \$150 million. This increase represents a modest but impactful investment of approximately \$53.50 per food-insecure New Yorker per year. For context, the research benchmark established by Feeding America estimates that meeting emergency food needs would require 212 pounds of food per person annually⁵, at a total statewide cost of \$458 million. This request does not close the full gap, but it meaningfully strengthens the system at a moment of extraordinary strain.

Program Impact: What This Funding Makes Possible

The return on investment is clear. Through Nourish New York, City Harvest has:

³ <https://www.osc.ny.gov/press/releases/2025/04/dinapoli-more-new-yorkers-facing-food-insecurity-tariffs-and-federal-funding-cuts-could-worsen>

⁴ <https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2026-01/FY2027ExecutiveBudgetBook.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/map-the-meal-gap/how-we-got-the-map-data>

- Sourced over 1.6 million pounds of food since 2020, with more than 82 percent consisting of protein, and the remainder fresh produce
- Leveraged \$432,695 in Nourish New York funding last year to procure food from five medium-sized New York agricultural producers, including HATCH for Hunger, Mosner Family Brands, Morning Star Poultry, Headwater, and Mulligan Creek Acres
- Strengthened local food systems while delivering nutritious, culturally relevant food to communities in need

Statewide, Nourish New York has generated over \$260 million in direct purchases from New York farmers, supporting more than 4,000 growers, producers,⁶ and vendors while enabling nearly 40 food banks and hundreds of community organizations to distribute over 20 million pounds of food annually.

HPNAP, meanwhile, plays a uniquely critical role by funding transportation, storage, and operational capacity, the often-invisible backbone that ensures food actually reaches New Yorkers safely. In FY25 alone, HPNAP enabled City Harvest to distribute 15 million pounds of food, including 3.1 million pounds of New York State-gleaned produce, directly supporting farmers while reducing food waste.

Without these programs, emergency food providers simply cannot meet demand, especially as more families are pushed out of federal nutrition programs.

Strengthening SNAP Access: SNAP Education & NOEP

As federal SNAP eligibility narrows and benefits shrink, state investment in access and education becomes even more critical. H.R. 1 not only imposes barriers and cuts to SNAP; it also reduces federal cost sharing for SNAP Outreach (NOEP) from 50 percent to 25 percent and eliminates SNAP education funding entirely. While both programs are modest relative to the 409 million meals at risk due to direct cuts to SNAP, they are undeniably critical to ensuring families have the support they need to access and maximize SNAP benefits at a time where food prices are rising and more red tape will make it harder to access and leverage SNAP benefit. SNAP outreach helps family access SNAP, while SNAP Education supports families in

⁶ <https://agriculture.ny.gov/news/nourish-ny-brings-more-three-million-pounds-surplus-new-york-food-new-york-farms-and-dairy>

stretching their SNAP benefits to access healthful foods for their families. Both programs improve food insecurity, with New York State's 1.8 million SNAP Ed participants experiencing a 25 percent reduction in food insecurity and 59 percent of participants saying they are more likely to compare grocery prices.⁷

City Harvest strongly supports:

- Investing \$30 million in SNAP-Ed, protecting nutrition education and outreach that helps families make healthy choices, improves long-term health outcomes, and strengthens community resilience
- Restoring \$8.5 million for SNAP outreach, ensuring eligible New Yorkers can enroll and stay enrolled with help from trained benefits experts

These state investments ensure SNAP remains accessible, effective, and equitable, particularly for communities facing language barriers, digital access challenges, and food prices and high grocery prices.

Addressing the Root Cause: Affordability

Finally, we urge the Legislature to invest in FY27 budget solutions that make life more affordable for New Yorkers, including healthcare, childcare, and housing—the top cost pressures reported by pantry participants.

Food insecurity is not a standalone problem. It is the consequence of an affordability crisis. When rent, childcare, and medical costs consume household budgets, food becomes the most flexible, and most frequently sacrificed, expense. Addressing these pressures reduces long-term reliance on emergency food and promotes lasting stability for families across New York.

Conclusion: A Call to Lead

The emergency food system has proven, time and again, that it can respond quickly and effectively in moments of crisis—whether during the pandemic, federal shutdowns, or natural disasters. That capacity exists because of sustained state investment, trusted partnerships, and deep community roots.

⁷ <https://snapedny.org/wp-content/uploads/SNAP-Ed-NY-FFY25-Impact-Report.pdf>

Increasing funding for HPNAP and Nourish New York to \$150 million, investing in SNAP-Ed, restoring SNAP outreach and addressing affordability are pragmatic, proven solutions that will protect millions of New Yorkers from hunger.

Washington has stepped back. Now New York must step up.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to testify. City Harvest looks forward to working with you to ensure that every New Yorker has access to the nutritious food they need to thrive.

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