GROUNDWORK COLLABORATIVE

Chair Rozic and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Emily DiVito, and I am the Senior Advisor for Economic Policy at Groundwork Collaborative, an economic policy think tank in Washington, D.C.

I am here to urge the Committee to implement a strict "street pricing" standard – a straightforward, popular, and proven fix for the price gouging that captive audiences face at publicly funded venues across New York.

As the Committee's hearing notice makes clear, New Yorkers rely on publicly funded venues and facilities – like state parks, beaches, airports, sports centers, and stadiums – for recreation, travel, and community life. But once inside, they may become a captive audience: often barred from bringing their own food and drink, patrons have no real alternative but to pay whatever price is posted.

Last year, Groundwork Collaborative released a report titled *"Shakedown at the Snack Counter: The Case for Street Pricing,"* outlining the economic case for implementing "street pricing" – a policy that ensures vendors inside publicly funded venues like sports stadiums and airports charge prices no higher than comparable goods sold just outside.[1]

Some airports – including New York's three major ones – already claim to have street pricing in place, but under so-called "street pricing plus" policies that still allow markups of 15% or more, with little enforcement. Recent travelers have reported paying nearly $7 for a bottle of water and $36 for a burrito.[2] And though some large sports stadiums have begun offering "fan pricing" for certain basic menu items, none have true street pricing policies in place – though virtually all benefit from public subsidy of some kind, from tax breaks to bond issuance.

New Yorkers do not have to look far to see the scale of this problem. A family attending a Rangers game this season could spend nearly $100 dollars on a beer, a soda, and two specialty hot dogs.[3] This is almost twice the next most expensive arena in the NHL.. This is not just a New York City problem: At the Buffalo Bills' brand new $2.2 billion Highmark Stadium – $850 million of it funded by taxpayers – fans can expect to pay up to $14 for a

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[1] Emily DiVito, Alex Jacquez, and Elizabeth Pancotti, "Shakedown at the Snack Counter: The Case for Street Pricing," Groundwork Collaborative, March 27, 2025, https://groundworkcollaborative.org/work/street-pricing/.
[2] Brian Britton, Facebook, June 16, 2026, https://www.facebook.com/brian.britton2/posts/water-is-689-a-bottle-in-laguardia-airport-in-new-york-yall-not-a-sandwich-or-a-/10162424339631150/; https://www.reddit.com/r/delta/comments/1t0wmyk/food_prices_at_t4_jfk_insane/.
[3] Laura Ratliff, "NYC Hockey Fans Have the Most Expensive Concession Bills in the NHL, All Thanks to a $36 Hot Dog," Time Out New York, October 22, 2026, https://www.timeout.com/newyork/news/nyc-hockey-fans-have-the-most-expensive-concession-bills-in-the-nhl-all-thanks-to-a-36-hot-dog-102226.

beer, over $15 for chicken fingers or a plain cheeseburger.[4] A 2026 analysis of NFL prices found attending a Bills game will run a family of four over $2,190 – the most expensive in the NFL and more than $700 above the league average.[5]

Street pricing is not just fair – it is good business. Airports in Portland and Salt Lake City reported travelers spending more money in shops since instituting strict pricing – a sign that people spend more freely when they don't feel like they're being gouged.[6] And after Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium voluntarily adopted "fan-first pricing" in 2017, cutting concession prices dramatically, they reported considerably higher vendor sales: a 30% increase in overall transactions, a 20% increase in merchandise sales, and a 20% increase in the number of items per transaction.[7]

These policies are also popular: An exclusive poll found that 73% of voters – including 78% of Independents and 76% of Republicans – support policies that restrict vendors from overcharging for concessions at venues receiving subsidies.[8]

Establishing street pricing as a consistent standard for vendors across publicly funded venues and facilities statewide, this Committee can help ensure that public investment translates into public benefit, not a captive market for price gouging.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee and its staff to tackle this important issue. I am happy to answer any questions.

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[4] CNY Central Staff, "Ribbon Cut on New $2.2B Highmark Stadium, Taxpayers Helped Fund $850M of It," WSTM (CNY Central), June 23, 2026, https://cnycentral.com/news/local/ribbon-cut-on-new-22b-highmark-stadium-taxpayers-helped-fund-850m-of-it.; Jeff Uveino, "New Highmark Stadium: Food Prices, Views and Fan Experience," Democrat and Chronicle, August 9, 2026, https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/sports/football/nfl/2026/08/09/new-highmark-stadium-food-prices-views-and-fan-experience/91213092007/; Democrat and Chronicle, "Step Inside Bills' New Highmark Stadium During Blue-Red Practice," Facebook, August 9, 2026, https://www.facebook.com/DemocratandChronicle/videos/step-inside-bills-new-highmark-stadium-during-blue-red-practice/1447432373862082/.

[5] Gautham Marthandan, "The Cheapest and Most Expensive NFL Stadiums for Families in 2026," Action Network, August 18, 2026, https://www.actionnetwork.com/nfl/the-cheapest-and-most-expensive-nfl-stadiums-for-families-in-2026.

[6] DiVito, Jacquez, and Pancotti, "Shakedown at the Snack Counter."

[7] Alex Schiffer, "Falcons Stadium Transactions Up 30% Since Huge Food Price Cut," Front Office Sports, December 23, 2024, https://frontofficesports.com/article/falcons-stadium-food-sales-explained/.

[8] Data for Progress, "National Survey Toplines: Concession Pricing at Publicly Subsidized Venues," March 21–22, 2025, https://www.filesforprogress.org/datasets/2025/3/dfp_gwc_vendor_toplines.pdf.