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### **City Harvest Cautions Census Bureau's Study Minimizes True Poverty Crisis**

Statement by Jilly Stephens, Executive Director, City Harvest

New York, NY – City Harvest ([www.cityharvest.org](http://www.cityharvest.org)), the world's first and New York's only food rescue organization, today expressed deep concern with the U.S. Census Bureau's poverty study released yesterday, calling the study's key finding, a .3 percent decrease in the nation's poverty rate, "an inadequate measure of tremendous progress."

Tuesday's "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2006" report revealed that the nation's poverty rate has fallen .3 percent from 12.6 percent in 2005 to 12.3 percent in 2006. It further concluded that the number of people living in poverty was not statistically different and that the incomes for those living in principal cities had not increased.

Now in its 25th year of service, City Harvest feeds hungry men, women, and children across New York City's five boroughs; each week, City Harvest helps over 260,000 New Yorkers find their next meal. In response to Tuesday's poverty report, Jilly Stephens, executive director of City Harvest, issued the following statement:

"A .3 percent decrease in the nation's official poverty rate, while moving in the right direction, is not an indication of tremendous progress as there are still 36.5 million Americans living in poverty. Nor is the poverty rate a fair and accurate portrayal of the true economic situation Americans face. According to the national poverty rate, poverty ends at \$20,614 for a family of four; for a family of three, \$16,079; for a family of two, \$13,167; and for unrelated individuals, \$10,294. These estimates fail to take into consideration a family's location, the area's housing costs, and cost of living; urban poverty in particular continues to be a significant problem given the consistent rise of housing costs and other basic needs

"We know, for instance, that in New York City, the amount needed for a family of four to be entirely self-sufficient, is on average \$57,000. When compared to the national poverty rate, this leaves an income gap of \$36,386 for the family to be self-sufficient. Despite the .3 percent decrease, we've seen no fewer people requiring assistance via emergency food programs. Our studies confirm that the majority of people we serve have homes and many are working; yet, they are still not self-sufficient. Rather, they are faced with having to choose between food and other necessities.

“We are concerned that the study’s findings do not depict an accurate picture of urban poverty and hunger. Emergency food and assistance programs remain as vital as always.”