



Testimony of City Harvest
Before the New York City Council General Welfare Committee
Hearing on Hunger, Food Security, and Federal Changes to SNAP
April 13, 2026

- 1. Fund Food Access Programs: Fund CFC at \$100M and Restore Food Access Discretionary Funds**
- 2. Enhance City Grocery Incentive Programs: Groceries to Go and Get the Good Stuff**
- 3. Defend SNAP: Fully Fund HRA ahead of \$100M in Admin Cost Shifts**

Thank you, Chairwoman Crystal Hudson and members of the General Welfare Committee, for holding today's hearing on Hunger, Food Security and Federal Changes to SNAP. My name is Jerome Nathaniel, and I am the Director of Policy & Government Relations at City Harvest, New York's first and largest food rescue organization.

For over 40 years, City Harvest has worked with food businesses and producers, pantry leaders, our partners in government and New Yorkers of all walks of life to invest in food secure futures for all New Yorkers. This year, we are on pace to rescue nearly 90 million pounds of food from thousands of food donors and deliver it to a network of over 400 pantries across the five boroughs. City Harvest strives to ensure that the food we deliver, the majority of which is fresh produce, is responsive to the dietary needs, cultural preferences and religious requirements of our communities. And more importantly, we are responsive to the level of need in our community. No matter if there is a natural disaster like Hurricane Sandy, a public health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, or a human-made crisis like a government shutdown, we have always stepped up to the plate to serve New Yorkers.

But as we sit here today to discuss federal changes to SNAP, one thing is abundantly clear: We have never faced a crisis like this before. Last year's federal spending package, HR1, presents the largest cuts to SNAP in our nation's history. By shrinking eligibility, shifting more costs to states and local government, and making arbitrary changes to SNAP benefit calculations, HR1 cuts SNAP by more than \$186 billion over the next ten years. Based on our local application of

Feeding America's methodology, we're projecting that more than 250 million meals are at risk of being lost across New York City annually.

Today is a critical moment to take stock of the impact of HR1 on New Yorkers and for our local government to commit to fighting for food security. City Harvest is here to engage in deep partnership with our local leaders in and out of government, and we will not accept a loss of 250 million meals as "just the way it is." There are several ways that we can work together to make sure that New Yorkers are F.E.D.: Fund, Enhance and Defend. We must fund food access programs, enhance city grocery incentive programs, and defend SNAP.

F: Fund Food Access Programs

When SNAP falls short or people are pushed off benefits, they turn to pantries. As the federal government pulls back, the City has to step up. We must Fund Food Access.

That starts with increasing Community Food Connection (CFC) funding from \$74.5 million to \$100 million. More than 700 pantries rely on CFC to keep food on their shelves.¹ City Harvest also uses this funding to support Mobile Markets serving NYCHA communities across the five boroughs. CFC is the foundation of the local emergency food supply and it needs to be strengthened.

In addition, the City Council should maintain \$26.89 million in funding for discretionary food security initiatives. This includes \$15 million for the Feeding Our Communities Initiative, \$8.26 million for the Food Pantry Initiative, \$2.13 million for the Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education Initiative, and \$1.5 million for the Food Access and Benefits Initiative. In total, this amounts to \$72.42 per year for each New Yorker experiencing food insecurity, or less than a week of groceries in our city.

E: Enhance City Grocery Incentive Programs

Programs like Groceries to Go and Get the Good Stuff work. They are helping New Yorkers stretch SNAP, afford fresh food, and stay healthy. Groceries to Go is reaching more than 4,000 NYC Health + Hospitals patients², while Get the Good Stuff supported over 19,000 New Yorkers across the city³.

These programs put real dollars back in people's pockets. Get the Good Stuff matches SNAP spending on produce, while Groceries to Go provides monthly grocery credits for patients

¹ <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/food-assistance.page>

² <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/groceries-to-go.page>

³ <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/free-produce-snap.page>

managing chronic conditions. Together, they connect food access with health and meet people where they are, from clinics to neighborhood stores.

At a time when federal changes are reducing the reach of SNAP, the City should be doubling down on what works.

But the FY2027 Preliminary Budget cuts \$3.2 million from Groceries to Go and excludes funding for Get the Good Stuff entirely. We are calling on the City to restore funding for Groceries to Go and to fund Get the Good Stuff at \$14 million.

D: Defend SNAP

HR1 tightens eligibility, expands work requirements, and shifts costs to states and cities. For New York State that shift could reach \$1.2 billion, putting hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers at risk of losing or struggling to access benefits.

At the same time, the scale of need is growing beyond what the emergency food system can absorb alone. Pantry visits are up 88 percent when compared to 2019.⁴ Meanwhile, the 2026 True Cost of Living report by the Fund for the City of New York found that nearly half—46%—of working-age households in New York City do not earn enough to cover the city's basic costs of living.⁵ This means that many of our neighbors must make tough choices—such as paying rent or buying groceries. These realities existed before federal cuts to SNAP. Not only do we need to defend SNAP, we need to address the generational affordability crisis that plagues working New Yorkers.

City Harvest is already responding. We have adjusted our operations to plan for increased demand and worked with HRA to train over 200 pantry partners to support New Yorkers navigating SNAP work-reporting requirements by serving as approved community volunteer sites where Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) can maintain their benefits by reporting adequate volunteer hours

But the City must do more to defend SNAP.

HR1 increases the local share of SNAP administrative costs from 50 percent to 75 percent, creating an estimated \$100 million gap for HRA. This is the baseline needed to keep the program running. Without it, delays, barriers, and case closures will increase, pushing more New Yorkers into the emergency food system.

⁴ City Harvest analysis of FeedNYC data

⁵ Overlooked and Undercounted: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in New York City 2026
<https://www.fcny.org/nyc-true-cost/>

Defending SNAP means fully funding HRA to administer and protect access to benefits. Anything less will drive demand that the emergency food system cannot absorb.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. City Harvest is proud to work alongside the City Council, our network of food pantries, and community partners to respond to rising hunger across New York City. As the need for food assistance continues to grow and federal policy changes place additional pressure on families, it is critical that the City strengthen the systems that help New Yorkers access food with dignity.

We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the Council to ensure that New Yorkers are F.E.D. Fund food access, enhance grocery incentive programs, and defend SNAP today.

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