Speaking Truth to Albany: End Finger-imaging Now!

Posted At : January 27, 2012 5:18 PM | Posted By : Food Bank Staff
Related Categories: Public Policy & Legislation, Government Supports

By Triada Stampas

This past Wednesday, I traveled to Albany to attend Governor Andrew Cuomo's second State of the State address. I was overjoyed to hear the governor highlight child hunger and come out forcefully against one of the biggest problems in our state's low-income benefits programs – the practice of fingerprinting during the application process for food stamps.

Since I couldn't say it better myself, here is what the governor said:

> "For all of our progress, there are still basic wrongs to right. There is never an excuse for letting any child in New York go to bed hungry. Statewide, 1 in 6 children live in homes without enough food on the table. Yet 30 percent of New Yorkers eligible for food stamps — over 1.4 million people — do not receive them, leaving over $1 billion in federal funds unclaimed every year.
>
> "We must increase participation in the food stamp program, remove barriers to participation and eliminate the stigma associated with this program. And we must stop fingerprinting for food. No child should go hungry in the great State of New York and we will do all that we can to prevent it."

In addition to calling for increased participation and the removal of barriers and stigma – including finger-imaging – from the food stamp program, he also called for a number of other initiatives that will help us and those we serve, including:

- improving food access in food deserts;
- foreclosure relief and tenant protection;
- setting up a health insurance exchange to provide more New Yorkers with insurance and lessen healthcare costs;
- and reducing (or, for some, eliminating) the state income tax burden on low-income New Yorkers.

It will take a lot of work to make all of this happen. But the fact that these issues all made it into this year's address means that these are the items Governor Cuomo has pledged to prioritize and devote resources to seeing done.

We don't see this happen every day, and we will be doing everything we can in the coming months and year to help make sure that true progress is made.

Triada Stampas works to inform government officials, policy makers and the general public about the needs of the city's network of emergency food organizations and the more than 1.3 million people who rely on them; and to advance public policy that meets those needs.