No More Breakfast – The Real Life Face of Budget Cuts

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By Daryl Foriest

Back in June, the Food Bank's Community Kitchen & Food Pantry lost close to 50 percent of our annual budget after reallocations of state funding. As the Director of Meal Services at the Community Kitchen, I have been struggling with this loss of funding every single day since that time.

As painful as it is for me to face the affects of budget cuts, I just can't compare my pain to what the New Yorkers we serve are going through – especially now.

Just about one month ago today, the Community Kitchen was forced to suspend our breakfast service – which served hot meals to 150 people every Tuesday and Thursday.

Though cutting two meal services may seem like a small sacrifice to some people, what most people don't understand is that the New Yorkers who come to the Community Kitchen are people who have already factored in every hot meal they get here into their monthly budget. They are so careful to make sure they can pay rent and pay their bills that any single meal lost is a big deal. The meals we provide are a major part of their lives.

What feels the worst to me is thinking about the parents. The kids who come here don't know they have it so bad. To them, this is just how they eat. For most of the parents, they don't just have to deal with the loss of meals. They have to think and find a way to replace those meals so that the loss doesn't hit their kids. But sometimes it's impossible to protect the kids.

At our last breakfast, an eight-year-old girl named Sabrina came with her mom. They are regulars, so I knew to take them aside. Sabrina's mom doesn't speak English, so I had to tell her that she couldn't come here for breakfast anymore. That was one of the hardest things I've ever done. I tried, but I just couldn't stay to see the mom's reaction. I already saw what it meant to Sabrina, and I couldn't watch her figure out how to tell her mom.

The Food Bank is committed to continuing to provide soup kitchen meals and food pantry pickups at the Community Kitchen five days a week – and we hope to bring breakfast back as soon as we can. Please consider making a donation to support the Community Kitchen today. Thank you!