

**ANTI-HUNGER POLICY PLATFORM  
FOR NEW YORK STATE AND CITY  
2007 – 2012**

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by NYS and NYC anti-hunger organizations at the  
Food Bank For New York City's  
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New York, New York**

## **SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS (WORKING LIST AS OF JUNE 2007)**

Alianza Dominicana  
Ammi Evangelical Baptist Church  
Blanche Memorial Church  
Broadway Community Inc. (BCI)  
Brooklyn AIDS Task Force  
Brooklyn Rescue Mission  
Cathedral Community Cares  
Central Harlem Sobering Up Station, Inc.  
Chance for Children  
Child Development Support Corporation  
Christian Fellowship Life Center Food Pantry  
Church of God Feeding the Hungry  
City Harvest, Inc.  
Congregation B'nai Jeshurun  
Council of Jewish Orgs of S.I.  
Crown Ministries International Inc.  
East 233rd Street Senior Center  
EJD PLACE  
Episcopal Charities  
Feed the Solution  
First A.M.E. Bethel Church  
FOCUS Churches of Albany  
Food Bank For New York City  
Food Bank for Westchester County, Food-PATCH  
Food Bank of Central New York  
Food Bank of the Southern Tier  
FoodChange  
Foodlink  
Fraternite Notre Dame  
Full Gospel Tabernacle of Faith  
Glenridge Senior Citizen Multi Service & Advisory Center  
Grand Concourse Community Service  
Hanac Ravenswood NORC  
Hands on New York, Inc.  
Helping Hands Food Pantry  
Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen  
Hope Center Development Corporation  
HopeLine Resource Center for Community Development, Inc.  
Hour Children  
Hunger Action Network of New York State (HANNYS)  
Island Harvest  
Jackson Heights SDA Church Community Services  
Jewish Community Center of Staten Island  
Lenox Hill Neighborhood House  
Little Mt. Bethel Baptist Church  
Long Island Cares  
Macedonia Church of Christ  
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty  
Moore Residence Home, Inc.  
Neighbors Together

New Gethsemane B.C. Soup Kitchen  
New Haven S.D.A. Temple  
New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH)  
New York City Emergency Food & Shelter Program  
Nutrition Consortium of NYS  
Part of the Solution (POTS)  
Path of Blessing  
Project Hospitality  
Reaching-Out Community Services, Inc.  
Reflection of God Ministry  
Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York  
Rescue Ministries Inc.  
Sacred Heart of Jesus Church  
Saint Benedict the Moor Neighborhood Center, Inc.  
Shout for Joy Baptist Church, Inc.  
St. Edward Food Pantry  
St. John's Bread and Life Program, Inc.  
St. Mary's Episcopal Church Soup Kitchen/Food Pantry  
Stapleton U.A.M.E. Church  
The Father's Heart Ministries  
The Momentum Project, Inc.  
Thorpe Family Residence  
United Methodist Center  
Village Temple Soup Kitchen  
United Way of NYC Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program  
West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH)  
World Hunger Year  
Yorkville Common Pantry

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## HUNGER POLICY PLATFORM SUMMARY

In the summer of 2006, a collective of city and state anti-hunger organizations, including representatives from emergency food programs (EFPs), held a series of meetings to collaboratively review and develop a shared anti-hunger policy platform that addresses specific federal, state and city hunger-related policies and funding. The platform primarily addresses hunger issues and will inform the advocacy efforts of each supporting organization, as well as broader policy discussions in the food, hunger and nutrition sector.

The group identified three focus areas: emergency food funding; government nutrition assistance programs, including the child nutrition programs; and long-term solutions, including the development of city- and statewide offices of food, hunger and nutrition policy.

To offset more than five years of cuts or flat funding for government-funded emergency food and in response to the underutilization of nutrition programs, which has placed a severe strain on EFPs, the platform calls for multi-year funding increases. Accounting for rises in poverty or food insecurity levels and adjusted for inflation, these funding increases would enable EFPs to better meet an existing and growing need. Consistent with these increases in need, over the next five years funding at the federal level for the USDA's Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) would increase to a Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 funding level of \$276.60 million, and funding for the FEMA administered Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) would increase to a FY 2012 funding level of \$214.59 million. At the state level, funding for the New York State Department of Health's Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) would increase to a FY 2012 funding level of \$56.30 million. Locally, funding for the New York City Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) would increase to a FY 2012 funding level of \$20.34 million.

The policy platform also prioritizes improving the availability of and access to government nutrition assistance programs, so as to address the low participation rates of eligible individuals and families across all programs. For example, streamlining access to the Food Stamp Program (FSP) by increasing the resource limit and list of exempt savings, eliminating the face-to-face interview, prohibiting finger-imaging, eliminating or minimizing work requirements, and strengthening and coordinating outreach efforts would increase participation rates among those eligible for the program. Converting the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) into entitlement programs would allow more eligible mothers, young children and elderly adults to access nutritious food. The platform further recommends restructuring the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and expanding the program to all states and counties, and fully funding the Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP), in an effort to improve access to these critical programs.

In a similar effort, increasing access to child nutrition programs is necessary to combat New York's extraordinarily high levels of child hunger and food insecurity. Recommendations include ensuring that universal breakfast and universal lunch programs are available throughout the state, creating incentives for nutritious grab-and-go meals, providing incentives for meals in the classroom, encouraging school districts to prepare more meals on site, funding initiatives to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables on the menu and appropriating increased funding for outreach. Recommendations for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) also seek to increase access and program availability by simplifying the reimbursement process for SFSP providers, expanding the number of sites in areas of high need and increasing funding for outreach to families with children.

To improve coordination of current anti-hunger resources and to achieve the recommendations outlined within this policy platform, the platform supports the creation of a New York State Council on Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy as well as a New York City Office of Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy.

The platform further focuses on addressing permanent solutions to hunger. With regard to long-term food and hunger-specific policies, the platform seeks to ensure permanent access to nutritious food in low-income neighborhoods by: recommending the creation of a City-State agreement to fund initiatives that would increase the supply of fresh food in local food stores, food cooperatives and emergency and

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community food programs; funding enhanced nutrition education; and increasing farmers' markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) projects. In recognition of poverty as the underlying cause of hunger, recommendations also outline measures to expand financial services and education for low-income individuals.

In addition to recommending specific policies to reduce hunger and expand financial education, the platform lends support to other initiatives that seek long-term socioeconomic sustainability, such as: the creation and maintenance of affordable housing; a living wage with benefits; affordable and comprehensive universal healthcare; open and equal access to education and training; career advancement opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed; affordable, accessible transportation; high quality affordable childcare; and a more progressive tax code.

As a living document, the platform will be revised regularly in the coming years to account for changes in government policies, shifts in the economic climate and the availability of funding sources. Much more than a set of policy recommendations, the platform expresses a unified voice on hunger policy and represents a concrete coalition of groups determined to eliminate hunger and ensure that all New Yorkers have access to affordable, nutritious food.

## SELECTED FEDERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**

TEFAP distributes surplus commodity food to low-income families and individuals, and represents a main source of federal commodities for emergency food providers.

- Increase funding by 46 percent over the next five years to a FY 2012 funding level of \$276.60 million.

### **Food Stamp Program (FSP)**

FSP provides monthly benefits to eligible low-income families and individuals for the purchase of nutritious foods.

- Prohibit the ability of states to require finger-imaging in order to receive FSP benefits.
- Restore eligibility for all documented immigrants.
- Eliminate the face-to-face interview in favor of alternative methods of gathering and verifying information.
- Increase the resource limit and the list of exempt saving categories.
- Simplify household access to food stamps and public health insurance simultaneously, through a combined application and outreach efforts, and by eliminating or minimizing work requirements for food stamps.

### **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)**

CSFP provides food packages specifically designed for low-income: pregnant women, breastfeeding and other mothers for up to one year after childbirth; children under the age of six; and elderly adults age 60 and older.

- Increase funding for CSFP so as to expand the program to all 50 states and all counties.
- Restructure CSFP to reflect its role as the national senior nutrition program, including renaming the program the "National Senior Nutrition Program."

### **The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP)**

EFSP funding subsidizes meals, groceries, lodging at shelters and other programs, one month's rent or mortgage payment, one month's utility bill, repairs for program facilities and necessary equipment.

- Increase funding by 42 percent over the next five years, to a FY 2012 funding level of \$214.59 million.

### **Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP)**

CFNP funds the coordination of food assistance resources, the identification of potential sponsors for child nutrition programs and other programs in underserved areas, and the development of innovative approaches to meet the nutritional needs of low-income people.

- Fully fund CFNP at \$7.28 million.

### **The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)**

SFMNP provides annual benefits to low-income elderly adults, so as to increase their access to fresh produce.

- Change the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program into an entitlement program with independent sources of funding.

### **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**

WIC supplies low-income infants, children and pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women with vouchers for food, nutrition counseling, health screening and referrals for health and others services.

- Fund WIC at a level that allows the program to be fully implemented without a reduction of services and change WIC into an entitlement program with an independent source of funding.

### **National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs**

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs provide cash and commodities to public and private schools, as a form of reimbursement for lunches and breakfasts.

- Appropriate increased funding for: meal reimbursements; start-up and expansion grants; administrative costs; and outreach to families with children.
- Create new funding sources to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables offered on the menu.

### **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**

SFSP funds centers that provide breakfasts and lunches to children ages 18 or younger during the summer months.

- Appropriate increased funding for: SFSP meal reimbursements; start-up and expansion grants; administrative costs; transportation of children and, where necessary, meals, to SFSP sites; toll-free hunger hotlines; and outreach to families with children.
- Expand the Simplified Summer Food Program (formerly the Lugar Pilot Program) to all states, which would enable sponsors to use a "meals x rate" reimbursement process.
- Expand the criteria for "open sites," where all children receive meals at no charge regardless of income, from the current requirement of at least 50 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals to 40 percent.

## SELECTED STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP)**

HPNAP provides emergency food programs with lines of credit at regional Food Banks and other organizations, and also awards grants for operations and equipment expenditures.

- Increase funding by 147 percent over the next five years to a FY 2012 funding level of \$56.3 million.

### **Food Stamp Program (FSP)**

FSP provides monthly benefits to eligible low-income families and individuals for the purchase of nutritious foods.

- Increase the New York State food stamp participation rate to 90 percent by the end of 2011.
- Restore eligibility for all documented immigrants.
- Eliminate the requirement that applicants for food stamp benefits provide finger images.
- Simplify household access to food stamps by: allowing households to apply for food stamps at any food stamp office within the state; minimizing face-to-face interviews; eliminating or minimizing work requirements; implementing an online application for food stamps; expanding food stamp office hours; and opening satellite offices for food stamp interviews.
- Strengthen and coordinate food stamp outreach efforts throughout the state, by mandating and providing additional funding for the distribution of food stamp outreach materials at emergency food programs, and by expanding the distribution of materials among providers and services that reach low-income populations.

### **The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)**

SFMNP provides annual benefits to low-income elderly adults, so as to increase their access to fresh produce.

- Provide information on food stamps to each person who receives food coupons through SFMNP.

### **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**

WIC supplies low-income infants, children and pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women with vouchers for food, nutrition counseling, health screening and referrals for health and others services.

- Ensure access to a WIC site in every low-income neighborhood.
- Increase state funding for outreach, breast-feeding promotion and peer counseling.

### **National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs**

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs provide cash and commodities to public and private schools, as a form of reimbursement for lunches and breakfasts.

- Start a universal School Breakfast and a universal School Lunch Program to provide free school meals to all children.
- Create incentives for schools to offer nutritious “grab-and-go” breakfasts and lunches at cafeteria and hallway kiosks, and provide incentives for breakfasts and lunches in the classroom.

### **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**

SFSP funds centers that provide breakfasts and lunches to children ages 18 or younger during the summer months.

- Appropriate funding for: SFSP meal reimbursements; start-up and expansion grants; administrative costs; transportation of children and, where necessary, meals, to SFSP sites; toll-free hunger hotlines; technical assistance during the start-up process, particularly for smaller nonprofit groups; and outreach to families with children.
- Ensure that the Education Department publicizes the program in a timely fashion by: identifying open school sites early enough to develop accurate lists for early publication, before school recess; reminding parents and students about the availability of summer meals on all school notices; and advertising how to access information regarding expanded sites throughout the summer.

### **New York State Council on Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy**

- Create a New York State Council on Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy that will work to implement the goals listed in this platform.

### **Improve Access to Nutritious Food**

- Create new funding at the state level for the purpose of developing initiatives that would increase the supply of and access to fresh food in low-income neighborhoods by: subsidizing improvements in storage capacity at bodegas for nutritious food; subsidizing food cooperatives in every low-income neighborhood in the state; funding enhanced nutrition education; and enabling emergency and community food providers to purchase locally grown produce.
- Increase farmers’ markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) projects in low-income communities.

### **Financial Services and Education for Low-Income New Yorkers**

- Offer classes and training programs throughout New York State on: how to access the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); banking services; wages and supplemental income; lender programs; mortgage lending; predatory credit policies; long-term and retirement financial planning; and other areas of personal finance.

## SELECTED CITY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP)

EFAP funds food distribution, provides administrative funding to build capacity at emergency food programs and also administers technical assistance grants.

- Increase funding by 38 percent over the next five years, to a FY 2012 funding level of \$20.34 million.
- Create an advisory council consisting of representatives of emergency food providers from all five boroughs, including nutritionists, who will meet with the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) on a quarterly basis so as to advise HRA on all EFAP food purchases.
- Improve the quality of food by offering more minimally processed and fresh food, and by giving programs choice over food selection.

### Food Stamp Program (FSP)

FSP provides monthly benefits to eligible low-income families and individuals for the purchase of nutritious foods.

- Increase the New York City food stamp participation rate to 90 percent by the end of 2011.
- Maximize the authority already given by the state to eliminate finger-imaging.
- Simplify household access to food stamps by: minimizing face-to-face interviews; expanding food stamp office hours; and opening satellite offices for food stamp interviews.
- Coordinate among multiple benefits so that clients can apply for several programs and services simultaneously, such as public health insurance, childcare subsidies and nutrition programs.
- Strengthen and coordinate food stamp outreach efforts throughout the state, by mandating and providing additional funding for the distribution of food stamp outreach materials at emergency food programs, and by expanding the distribution of materials among providers and services that reach low-income populations.

### Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

WIC supplies low-income infants, children and pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women with vouchers for food, nutrition counseling, health screening and referrals for health and others services.

- Mandate that the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene work in coordination with the New York State Department of Health to provide oversight over the WIC program.

### **National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs**

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs provide cash and commodities to public and private schools as a form of reimbursement for lunches and breakfasts. School Breakfast is universal in New York City.

- Start a universal School Lunch Program to provide free school lunch to all children.
- Create incentives for schools to offer nutritious “grab-and-go” breakfasts and lunches at cafeteria and hallway kiosks and provide incentives for breakfasts and lunches in the classroom.
- Serve breakfast at the start of the first period of the school day.

### **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)**

SFSP funds centers that provide breakfasts and lunches to children ages 18 or younger during the summer months.

- Ensure that some sites are open for the entire duration of time that schools are closed for summer recess.
- Open additional school sites, particularly in high need areas, even if they do not meet the optimum level of 250 participants per day.
- Provide breakfast and lunch to students enrolled in summer school and create incentives for schools to offer nutritious “grab-and-go” summer meals in the classroom.

### **New York City Office of Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy**

- Create a New York City Office of Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy that will work to implement the goals listed in this platform.

### **Improve Access to Nutritious Food**

- Create new funding at the city level for the purpose of developing initiatives that would increase the supply of and access to fresh food in low-income neighborhoods by: subsidizing improvements in storage capacity at bodegas for nutritious food; subsidizing food cooperatives in every low-income neighborhood in the city; funding enhanced nutrition education; and enabling emergency and community food providers to purchase locally grown produce.
- Increase farmers’ markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) projects in low-income communities.

### **Financial Services and Education for Low-Income New Yorkers**

- Offer classes and training programs throughout New York City on: how to access the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); banking services; wages and supplemental income; lender programs; mortgage lending; predatory credit policies; long-term and retirement financial planning; and other areas of personal finance.

## FEDERAL POLICY GOALS

### FARM BILL

The Farm Bill covers all federal agricultural programs including those that govern safe water and food production, land and water use, economic and infrastructure development and continued research and innovation in the farm community. The most recent bill, known as the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, expires in FY 2006. The Farm Bill authorizes several government-funded emergency food programs and nutrition assistance programs, including The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the federal Food Stamp Program (FSP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP):

#### The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), was established in 1981 to distribute surplus commodity food to low-income families and individuals. Approximately 80 percent of TEFAP commodities are distributed to programs, including food pantries and soup kitchens, through America’s Second Harvest – The Nation’s Food Bank Network.<sup>1</sup> America’s Second Harvest estimates that between 10 and 40 percent of all food distributed by its members are TEFAP commodities and further estimates that 69 percent of food pantries and 49 percent of soup kitchens in its network participated in TEFAP in 2005.<sup>2,3</sup> Since FY 2002, funding for TEFAP increased by 26 percent, from a FY 2002 funding level of \$150 million.<sup>4</sup> In the past couple of years, however, funding levels have remained unchanged. FY 2005 funding for TEFAP was \$189.60 million, while in FY 2006, \$189.50 million was appropriated for the program — \$50 million of which was designated for administration and storage.<sup>5</sup>

Between 2001 and 2004, the number of people living in food insecure households increased by 14 percent throughout the United States.<sup>6</sup> Due to inflation, recent flat-funding of TEFAP has effectively resulted in annual funding cuts of 5 percent. As a consequence of these two facts, the need has increased while funding for the program has decreased.

#### Policy Recommendations

- Increase TEFAP funding by 46 percent over the next five years to a FY 2012 funding level of \$276.60 million. To reflect the 14 percent increase in national food insecurity between 2001 and 2004,<sup>7</sup> TEFAP funding should increase by 14 percent over the next five years, at a rate of 2.8 percent per year (as shown in **Table 1**). To adjust for inflation, there should be an additional 5 percent annual increase in funding, resulting in a total funding increase of 7.8 percent per year.
- Improve the quality of food by offering more minimally processed fresh food.

**Table 1: Proposed TEFAP Funding Increase over the Next Five Years (FY2007 - FY2012)**

Fiscal Year <sup>8</sup>	Percent Increase	Proposed TEFAP Funding
2007-2008	7.8%	\$204.82 million
2008-2009	7.8%	\$220.80 million
2009-2010	7.8%	\$238.02 million
2010-2011	7.8%	\$256.58 million
2011-2012	7.8%	\$276.60 million
<b>Total Increase from FY2007 – FY2012</b>	<b>46.0%</b>	<b>\$86.60 million</b>

<sup>1</sup> America’s Second Harvest. (2006). *The Almanac of Hunger and Poverty in America 2006*.

<sup>2</sup> America’s Second Harvest. (2006). “Fact Sheet: The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).” *America’s Second Harvest*. July 12.

<sup>3</sup> America’s Second Harvest. (2006). *The Almanac of Hunger and Poverty in America 2006*.

<sup>4</sup> Food Research and Action Center. (2002). *Analysis of President Bush’s Fiscal Year 2003 Budget Proposal*.

<sup>5</sup> America’s Second Harvest. (2006). *The Almanac of Hunger and Poverty in America 2006*.

<sup>6</sup> Nord, M., Andrews and Carlson, S. USDA Economic Research Service. (2005). *Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2004*.

<sup>7</sup> Nord, M., Andrews and Carlson, S. USDA Economic Research Service. (2005). *Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2004*.

<sup>8</sup> The fiscal year begins on October 1<sup>st</sup> of a given year, and ends September 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year.

## Food Stamp Program (FSP)

Administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the federal Food Stamp Program (FSP) provides monthly benefits to eligible low-income families and individuals for the purchase of nutritious food. Financial eligibility policies require households to have gross yearly incomes below 130 percent of the federal poverty line. Asset limits and non-financial eligibility requirements also apply. Since the transfer from paper coupons, participants now utilize their monthly allowances through electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards. The Administration's FY 2007 budget proposes to fund the Food Stamp Program at \$37.912 billion, a decrease of \$2.799 billion from FY 2006.<sup>9</sup>

While current proposals would cut food stamp funding by \$2.77 billion, the need for the program has increased significantly in recent years. Between 2001 and 2004, the number of people living in food insecure households increased by 14 percent throughout the United States.<sup>10</sup> Poverty also witnessed a sharp increase, rising by 10 percent between 2000 and 2004.<sup>11</sup> Commensurate with this growing need, food stamp participation has also increased. In an average month of 2004, 23 million of the 38 million people eligible for food stamps participated in the program, representing a participation rate of 60 percent and an increase of almost 5 percentage points since 2003.<sup>12</sup> Participation rates were highest for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), as well as for individuals from the poorest households, with rates exceeding 75 percent.<sup>13</sup> While participation rates among these groups are significantly higher than the national average, participation rates among elderly adults, non-disabled childless adults, individuals living above the poverty line and non-citizens hover around one-third of those eligible.<sup>14</sup>

### Policy Recommendations

- Restore eligibility for all documented immigrants.
- Increase the resource limit and the list of exempt saving categories.
- Simplify household access to food stamps and public health insurance simultaneously by ensuring that states offer food stamps, Medicaid, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and childcare subsidies together, generally with a combined application and outreach efforts, so long as such outreach increases participation.
- Prohibit the ability of states to require finger-imaging in order to receive FSP benefits.
- Eliminate the face-to-face interview in favor of alternative methods of gathering and verifying information.
- Eliminate or minimize work requirements to align the program more closely with other federal benefit programs, so as to improve access for low-income families (including the newly unemployed and part-time workers) and to clarify that the Food Stamp Program is a nutrition assistance program.
- Oppose the Administration's food stamp cut of \$656 million in five-year spending through elimination of food stamps for approximately 300,000 people in low-income working families (when the cut is fully implemented).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The United Way of America. (2006). *The Bush Administration's FY 2007 Budget*. February 9.

<sup>10</sup> Nord, M., Andrews and Carlson, S. USDA Economic Research Service. (2005). *Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2004*.

<sup>11</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>12</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2006). *Food Stamp Program Participation Rates: 2004 Summary*. June.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2006). *Food Stamp Program Participation Rates: 2004 Summary*. June

<sup>15</sup> Food Research and Action Center. (2006). *FY 2007 Budget Message: Protect Food and Nutrition Programs*. March 3. This proposed cut would also cost 40,000 needy children access to free school meals, reducing school meal spending by \$50 million. Congress last year rejected this proposal to change "categorical eligibility" rules. It should reject it again. Under current federal law, states have the option to treat as categorically eligible for food stamps those families which are receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program services. Although the families may have modest savings or "gross income" that slightly exceeds the Food Stamp Program's regular rules, if the state takes this option they may receive benefits. Their net income after expenses are deducted still has to meet the regular (strict) food

- Reject optional block grants and extraordinary waiver authority.
- Increase funds for Food Stamp Program administration, which is essential to fund technology improvements and ensure adequate staffing.
- Fund additional outreach measures to reverse the decline in food stamp participation among working families, particularly through grants to nonprofit organizations.
- Rename the Food Stamp Program, thereby removing the obsolete reference to coupons, reducing stigma and providing opportunity for new outreach.
- Change performance measurements so that the success of states and localities in issuing food stamp benefits will no longer be assessed mainly on error rates; rather, performance should be assessed by success in: a) increasing the percentage of eligible people participating; and b) streamlining the administrative process to receive benefits.
- Calculate benefits allotment using a more accurate and up-to-date measurement.
- Extend transitional food stamps (TBA) from five months to six months, and ensure that they are renewable to 12 months, so as to better conform to other federal benefit programs.
- Lengthen certification periods to a minimum of 12 months, so as to counteract the decline in participation that results when working families are required to reapply every three months.
- Extend the recertification period for older adults without earned income from two to four years.
- Increase the minimum monthly benefit from \$10 to \$25.
- Provide a standard medical deduction similar to the standard utility allowance for use in calculating food stamp benefits with persons whose medical bills exceed the standard deduction allowed so that they may use their actual costs instead.
- Provide the USDA with more authority and funding to help states, localities and nonprofit groups to increase the usage of food stamps at farmers' markets, roadside farm stands, community-supported agriculture (CSA) projects and food-producing community gardens, particularly by simplifying the process by which state farmers' market associations apply for food stamp authorization on behalf of member markets.

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stamp income test, and they still must complete the food stamp application process. The Administration would make these families ineligible for food stamps.

### **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)**

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) supplies food packages specifically designed for low-income: pregnant women, breastfeeding and other mothers for up to one year after childbirth; children under the age of six; and elderly adults age 60 years or older. The program seeks to supplement the nutritional content of the target populations' diet with nutrients typically lacking from these low-income groups' diets.

Although CSFP was a precursor to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the two programs differ in significant ways. In contrast to WIC, CSFP serves elderly adults (who represent 90 percent of program participants), children between the ages of five and six, and non-breastfeeding mothers six to 12 months after childbirth. Also in contrast to WIC, CSFP delivers food packages to participants directly, which consist of bulk-purchased or donated food.

In FY 2006, the federal government appropriated \$111.2 million for the program, which helped served approximately 472,385 people.<sup>16</sup> On February 6, 2006, President Bush proposed to eliminate all funding for this USDA administered program. While current proposals would eliminate CSFP funding, the need for this program has increased considerably. Between 2001 and 2004, the number of people living in food insecure households increased by 14 percent throughout the United States.<sup>17</sup> Poverty also witnessed a sharp increase, rising by 10 percent between 2000 and 2004.<sup>18</sup>

### **Policy Recommendations**

- Increase funding for CSFP so as to expand the program to all 50 states and all counties.
- Restructure CSFP to reflect its role as the national senior nutrition program, including renaming the program the "National Senior Nutrition Program."

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<sup>16</sup> America's Second Harvest. (2006). *The Almanac of Hunger and Poverty in America 2006*.

<sup>17</sup> Nord, M., Andrews and Carlson, S. USDA Economic Research Service. (2005). *Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2004*.

<sup>18</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

**THE EMERGENCY FOOD AND SHELTER PROGRAM (EFSP)**

Funded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) was launched in 1983 and now supports more than 200 organizations that operate almost 1,000 shelters, food pantries and soup kitchens throughout New York City. EFSP funding subsidizes meals, groceries, lodging at shelters and other programs, one month’s rent or mortgage payment, one month’s utility bill, repairs for program facilities and equipment necessary to feed and shelter individuals.<sup>19</sup>

The FY 2001 federal funding level for EFSP was \$140 million.<sup>20</sup> In the intervening years between FY 2001 and FY 2006, funding increased by \$13 million to a FY 2006 funding level of \$153 million. Congress then passed an across-the-board cut in discretionary funding of 1 percent, reducing EFSP program funding by \$1.5 million, to a FY 2006 funding level of \$151.5 million.<sup>21</sup>

In recent years, New York State and New York City have experienced drastic cuts in EFSP funding. The total New York State award for FY 2006 was \$9,491,104, a decrease of 10 percent from the FY 2005 funding level of \$10,575,458.<sup>22</sup> Over this same span, the New York City EFSP award decreased by 19 percent, dropping from a FY 2005 award of \$5,643,443 to a FY 2006 award of \$4,581,417.<sup>23</sup> New York City’s FY 2006 award represents its smallest award since FY 1997. Despite these recent funding cuts, the need throughout the United States has grown significantly. Between 2000 and 2004, poverty has increased by 10 percent.<sup>24</sup>

**Policy Recommendations**

- Increase federal funding by 42 percent over the next five years, to a FY 2012 funding level of \$214.59 million. To reflect the 10 percent increase in poverty from 2000 to 2004,<sup>25</sup> EFSP funding should increase by 10 percent over the next five years, at a rate of 2 percent per year (as shown in **Table 2**). To adjust for inflation, there should be an additional 5 percent annual increase in funding, resulting in a total funding increase of 7 percent per year. In this analysis, the 1 percent cut in FY 2006 discretionary funding was restored to EFSP in FY 2008.
- Increase the percent of funding allocated for actual administrative costs.
- Allocate funding for EFSP before the program begins on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Table 2: Proposed EFSP Funding Increase over the Next Five Years (FY2007 – FY2012)**

Fiscal Year	Percent Increase	Proposed EFSP Funding
2007-2008	8.0%	\$163.71 million
2008-2009	7.0%	\$175.17 million
2009-2010	7.0%	\$187.43 million
2010-2011	7.0%	\$200.55 million
2011-2012	7.0%	\$214.59 million
<b>Total Increase from FY2007 – FY2012</b>	<b>42.0%</b>	<b>\$63.12 million</b>

<sup>19</sup> The United Way of America. (2004). *The Emergency Food and Shelter Program*. May.  
<sup>20</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>21</sup> The United Way of America. (2005). *The Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program*.  
<sup>22</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>23</sup> The United Way of America. (2005). *The Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program*.  
<sup>24</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.  
<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

## **COMMUNITY FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAM (CFNP)**

Administered by the Office of Community Services in the Department of Health and Human Services, the Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP) is funded through the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill, as a line item in the Community Services Block Grant.<sup>26</sup> Programs can use CFNP funds to: coordinate private and public food assistance resources; assist low-income communities in identifying potential sponsors of child nutrition programs and initiating new programs in underserved areas; and develop innovative approaches to meet the nutritional needs of low-income people.

CFNP grant money is distributed to states, public agencies, nonprofit groups and Community Action Agencies. Sixty percent of CFNP funds are allocated to states, to be distributed among local programs, while the remaining 40 percent of funds are allocated to state and local programs on a competitive basis. In FY 2004, CFNP was funded at \$7.28 million.<sup>27</sup> With growing need throughout the country, this program is now more important than ever. Between 2001 and 2004, the number of people living in food insecure households increased by 14 percent throughout the United States.<sup>28</sup> Poverty also witnessed a sharp increase, rising by 10 percent between 2000 and 2004.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Policy Recommendation***

- Fully fund CFNP at \$7.28 million.

## **THE SENIOR FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM (SFMNP)**

Administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) awards state grants to fund programs that provide elderly adults living below 185 percent of the federal poverty line access to fresh produce. The program is also intended as a means of supporting local agriculture through farmers' markets, roadside stands and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. Elderly adults who participate in the program receive a coupon once a year, ranging in value from \$10 to \$540. The SFMNP has been flat-funded in recent years, receiving an appropriation of \$15 million in FY 2002 and another appropriation of \$15 million in FY 2005.<sup>30</sup> Congress authorized to continue this annual funding level through 2007. As of FY 2003, the SFMNP operated in 35 states, three Indian Tribal Organizations, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.<sup>31</sup>

Between 2001 and 2004, the number of people living in food insecure households increased by 14 percent throughout the United States.<sup>32</sup> Poverty also witnessed a sharp increase, rising by 10 percent between 2000 and 2004.<sup>33</sup> With poverty and food insecurity on the rise, the federal government must act to improve the SFMNP so as to ensure the wellbeing and health of all elderly adults.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

- Change the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program into an entitlement program with independent sources of funding.
- Provide the USDA with more authority – and funding – to help states, localities and nonprofit groups to increase the usage of senior farmers' market benefits at farmers' markets, roadside farm stands, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects and food-producing community gardens.

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<sup>26</sup> Food Research and Action Center. (2004). *Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP) Fact Sheet*.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Nord, M., Andrews and Carlson, S. USDA Economic Research Service. (2005). *Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2004*.

<sup>29</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>30</sup> Food Research and Action Center. *Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Fact Sheet*.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Nord, M., Andrews and Carlson, S. USDA Economic Research Service. (2005). *Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2004*.

<sup>33</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

## SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC)

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a federally sponsored program that supplies low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women and infants and children five years of age and younger with vouchers for food, nutrition counseling, health screening and referrals for health and other services. The program is not an entitlement program, but rather funding is appropriated each fiscal year, which then determines how many people can participate in the program. WIC is administered by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. In FY 2005, the federal government spent \$5.16 billion on the program and provided services for slightly more than 8 million individuals.<sup>34</sup> This funding increased to \$5.5 billion in FY 2006.<sup>35</sup> The Administration's FY 2007 budget proposes to fund WIC at \$5.2 billion dollars.<sup>36</sup>

While funding levels continue to fall, the need for WIC has increased significantly in recent years. Between 2001 and 2004, the number of people living in food insecure households increased by 14 percent throughout the United States.<sup>37</sup> Poverty also witnessed a sharp increase, rising by 10 percent between 2000 and 2004.<sup>38</sup> During this same time period, child poverty increased even more dramatically, from a 2000 level of 11.7 million children to a 2004 level of 13.2 million children, representing a 10.8 percent increase.<sup>39</sup>

### Policy Recommendations

- Fund WIC at a level that allows the program to be fully implemented without a reduction of services and change WIC into an entitlement program with an independent source of funding.<sup>40</sup>
- Provide USDA with more authority – and funding – to help states, localities and nonprofit groups to increase the usage of WIC at farmers' markets, roadside farm stands, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects and food-producing community gardens.
- Establish a contingency fund in conjunction with the current discretionary funding structure that would maintain participation throughout the year, should the appropriated amount fall short due to unforeseen events, such as an economic downturn or unexpected increases in WIC food prices.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>34</sup>United States Department of Agriculture. (2002). *WIC Funding and Program Data*. Food and Nutrition Service. April.

<sup>35</sup> United States Department of Agriculture. (2006). *Focusing on the Nation's Priorities*.

<sup>36</sup> Food Research and Action Center. (2006). *Nutrition Program Changes in the President's Budget*. February 6.

<sup>37</sup> Nord, M., Andrews and Carlson, S. USDA Economic Research Service. (2005). *Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2004*.

<sup>38</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>39</sup> United States Census Bureau, Census 2000 and the American Community Survey 2001 - 2004.

<sup>40</sup>Food Research and Action Center. (2006). *Nutrition Program Changes in the President's Budget*. February 6. The Administration's current budget proposal looks to fund the WIC program in FY 2007 at \$5.2 billion. The administration estimates that this funding will serve an average monthly caseload of 8.2 million WIC participants, and thus all individuals who are eligible to receive WIC will be able to participate in the program. The Administration only achieves this full funding, however, through a reduction in funding for the Nutrition and Administrative Services. The Administration therefore proposes to ensure the full implementation of WIC by curtailing services and recipient benefits. While it is imperative to provide funding sufficient for the full implementation of the program, all WIC eligible women, infants and children must receive full benefits.

<sup>41</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2002). *A Brief Summary of Issues in Making WIC and Individual Entitlement*. April

30. Contingency funds would be distributed at the Secretary's discretion, and, unlike regular appropriated funds that are distributed to all states via a funding allocation formula, could be targeted to those states that experience unanticipated funding shortfalls that might lead them to restrict participation. A contingency fund in addition to the regular appropriation could preserve current program features while establishing a structure to respond quickly to unanticipated funding needs and provide benefits to all participants.

## **NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH AND SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS**

Authorized under the National School Lunch Act, the National School Lunch Program provides cash and commodities to public and private elementary and secondary schools as a form of reimbursement for lunches. Students living at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty line receive free lunches, while those students living between 130 percent and 185 percent of the federal poverty line are eligible for reduced-price meals. A total of 30 million children participated in the program in FY 2005, representing 60 percent of all students enrolled in participating schools.<sup>42</sup> The federal government supplied \$7 billion for the program in that year.<sup>43</sup>

The School Breakfast Program is a federally sponsored program that provides reimbursements for breakfasts in public and private elementary and secondary schools. Students living at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty line receive free breakfasts, while those students living between 130 percent and 185 percent of the federal poverty line are eligible for reduced-price meals. Throughout the U.S. 41 million children participated in the program in 2005.<sup>44</sup> The FY 2005 budget allocated \$1.94 billion for the program.<sup>45</sup>

With increasing need and low participation rates, the current structure of both the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs requires overhaul. Between 2001 and 2004, the number of people living in food insecure households increased by 14 percent throughout the United States.<sup>46</sup> Poverty also witnessed a sharp increase, rising by 10 percent between 2000 and 2004.<sup>47</sup> During this same time period, child poverty increased even more dramatically, from a 2000 level of 11.7 million children to a 2004 level of 13.2 million children, representing a 10.8 percent increase.<sup>48</sup>

A wide range of factors prevent full participation in these vital child nutrition programs, including economic, social, psychological, logistical and administrative barriers. Reducing the stigma associated with school meals is one of the foremost necessary steps in the effort to increase program participation. Too often children decline to participate in school lunches and school breakfasts because they fear their classmates' ridicule. Current program structure also invites distinctions between low-income and wealthier students, providing only the former with free and reduced-price meals. The availability of competitive food in vending machines and elsewhere also encourages low-income students to spend their money on less nutritious food, while further increasing the stigma associated with school meals. In addition to these administrative and psychosocial barriers, logistical and economic challenges further undermine program participation. School overcrowding very often results in excessively staggered lunch schedules, leaving some students with lunch periods shortly after the beginning of the day and immediately before day's end. Limited space and a lack of adequate staffing also impede the expansion of school meals. When school breakfast is not incorporated into the school day, parents often find it difficult to arrange for the necessary transportation, particularly low-income families with little flexibility in their work schedules. Further exacerbating each of these difficulties is the lack of awareness regarding school lunch and school breakfast among families with children, and the inability of schools to conduct effective outreach.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

- Appropriate increased funding for: meal reimbursements; start-up and expansion grants; administrative costs; and outreach to families with children.
- Create new funding sources to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables on the menu.

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<sup>42</sup> America's Second Harvest. (2006). *The Almanac of Hunger and Poverty in America 2006*.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> America's Second Harvest. (2006). *The Almanac of Hunger and Poverty in America 2006*.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Nord, M., Andrews and Carlson, S. USDA Economic Research Service. (2005). *Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2004*.

<sup>47</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>48</sup> United States Census Bureau, Census 2000 and the American Community Survey 2001 - 2004.

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- Provide incentives for schools to increase the number of nutritious meals prepared on-site, which tend to be fresher and more appealing to students, and would enable greater flexibility in menu planning while allowing food service staff to respond more effectively to student preferences.
- Restrict the sale of competitive food (in snack bars, student stores, vending machines and á la carte lines) during the school day, so as to improve access to school meals and reduce stigma.
- Improve the type and form of USDA commodities that schools receive, particularly by reducing the fat and sodium levels of processed food.
- Ensure that school districts adhere to identification guidelines.
- Encourage schools to schedule lunches as close to midday as possible, and to cease scheduling lunches at 10am and 2:00pm.

## **SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM (SFSP)**

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) was created in 1968 as a pilot program and shortly thereafter became an entitlement program. The program supplies funding for centers that provide breakfasts and lunches to children ages 18 or younger. Providers are eligible for 'open' site status if they operate in a community where 50 percent of children fall below 185 percent of the federal poverty line. Open sites can serve free meals to all children, irrespective of income. Sites that do not qualify for 'open' status may apply for 'closed enrolled site' status only if they can demonstrate that at least 50 percent of program participants qualify for free or reduced-price meals in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. Closed enrolled sites receive funding for meals served to enrolled program participants, and may only serve program participants.

Though participation rates in SFSP remain low, the need for this child nutrition program has grown considerably. Between 2001 and 2004, the number of people living in food insecure households increased by 14 percent throughout the United States.<sup>49</sup> Poverty also witnessed a sharp increase, rising by 10 percent between 2000 and 2004.<sup>50</sup> During this same time period, child poverty increased even more dramatically, from a 2000 level of 11.7 million children to a 2004 level of 13.2 million children, representing a 10.8 percent increase.<sup>51</sup>

Like school breakfast and lunch, a variety of socioeconomic, logistical and administrative barriers circumscribe SFSP participation. Complicated reimbursement processes that often underestimate program costs deter many providers from opening SFSP sites. Children and parents often have difficulty arranging transportation to SFSP sites, particularly in rural communities, and among low-income families with inflexible working schedules. Further exacerbating each of these problems is a lack of awareness regarding SFSP among low-income families with children.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

- Expand the Simplified Summer Food Program (formerly the Lugar Pilot Program) to all states, which would enable sponsors to use a 'meals x rate' reimbursement process.
- Expand the criteria for "open sites," where all children receive meals at no charge regardless of income, from the current requirement of at least 50 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals to 40 percent.
- Appropriate increased funding for: SFSP meal reimbursements; start-up and expansion grants; administrative costs; transportation of children and, where necessary, meals to SFSP sites; toll-free hunger hotlines; and outreach to families with children.
- Create incentives for schools to offer nutritious "grab-and-go" meals, and incentives for meals in the classroom.
- Create new funding sources to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables on the menu.
- Provide incentives for schools to increase the number of nutritious meals prepared on-site, which tend to be fresher and more appealing to students, and would enable greater flexibility in menu planning while allowing food service staff to respond more effectively to student preferences.

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<sup>49</sup> Nord, M., Andrews and Carlson, S. USDA Economic Research Service. (2005). *Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2004*.

<sup>50</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>51</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2000, 2001-2004). *Census and the American Community Survey*.

## **EFFORTS TO REDUCE POVERTY**

The anti-hunger community can only eradicate poverty by embracing a holistic approach to the problem and by collaborating with policy advocates in the healthcare, housing and education fields, as well as with all others who combat this multi-faceted socioeconomic problem. With this paradigm in mind, the anti-hunger community lends its support to those seeking: a living wage with benefits; affordable and comprehensive universal health care; career advancement opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed; open and equal access to education and training; the creation and maintenance of new affordable housing; affordable, accessible transportation; high quality, affordable child care; a more progressive tax code; and all other forms of socioeconomic uplift. Only this holistic approach is capable of ending poverty, and only by ending poverty will hunger be eliminated.

In addition to supporting each of these aforementioned issues, the anti-hunger community will also engage in long-term anti-poverty efforts that will specifically seek to reduce hunger and improve access to nutritious food. The goal will be two-fold: to end hunger; and by ending hunger, to help eliminate poverty and all of its manifestations.

## STATE POLICY GOALS

### HUNGER PREVENTION AND NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HPNAP)

The Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program is a state sponsored grant that provides emergency food programs with lines of credit at regional Food Banks and other organizations, including the Food Bank For New York City and the United Way. In addition to the credit lines, HPNAP is also comprised of The Operations Support and Equipment grant, which awards emergency food programs up to \$3000 for operations and equipment expenditures. This program is administered by the New York State Department of Health. In total, HPNAP was funded at \$22.8 million in 2005, which represents a 7 percent decrease from the FY 2002 funding level of \$24.44 million.

Despite these recent funding cuts, the need has increased throughout New York State. Between 2002 and 2004, poverty has increased by 9 percent in New York.<sup>52</sup>

#### Policy Recommendations

- Increase HPNAP funding by 147 percent over the next five years to a FY 2012 funding level of \$56.3 million. To reflect the 9 percent increase in New York State poverty from 2002 to 2004,<sup>53</sup> HPNAP funding should increase by 9 percent over the next five years, at a rate of 1.8 percent per year (as shown in **Table 3**). To adjust for inflation, there should be an additional 5 percent annual increase in funding, resulting in a total funding increase of 6.8 percent per year. In this analysis, the FY 2005 funding cut of \$2 million was restored to HPNAP. When adjusted for inflation, this calculation provides a baseline FY 2007 funding level of \$30.15 million.
- Increase funding for actual administrative and operational support.

**Table 3: Proposed HPNAP Funding Increase over the Next Five Years (FY2007 – FY2012)**

Fiscal Year	Percent Increase	Proposed HPNAP Funding
2003-2004	\$2 million restoration + 5.0%	\$26.04 million
2004-2005	5.0%	\$27.34 million
2005-2006	5.0%	\$28.71 million
2006-2007	5.0%	\$30.15 million
2007-2008	6.8%	\$32.19 million
2008-2009	6.8%	\$37.03 million
2009-2010	6.8%	\$42.58 million
2010-2011	6.8%	\$48.97 million
2011-2012	6.8%	\$56.30 million
<b>Total Increase from FY2007 – FY2012</b>	<b>147.0%</b>	<b>\$33.50 million</b>

<sup>52</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

**FOOD STAMP PROGRAM (FSP)**

Authorized under the Farm Bill, the federal government provided \$2.1 billion in funding for the Food Stamp Program in New York State in 2005.<sup>54</sup> While the participation rate in food stamps has increased in recent years, too many state residents do not access this vital food assistance program. Currently, the New York State participation rate is two-thirds (66 percent) of eligible individuals, meaning that over one-third (34 percent) of New Yorkers eligible for the program are not enrolled.<sup>55</sup> Given that state poverty has risen by 9 percent between 2002 and 2004,<sup>56</sup> increasing the participation rate for food stamps is a necessary step in reducing this growing need.

**Policy Recommendations**

- Increase the New York State food stamp participation rate to 90 percent by the end of 2011 (**Table 4**).

**Table 4: Proposed Increase in Food Stamps Participation over the Next Five Years (2007 – 2011)**

Year	Percentage Point Increase in Participation	Participation Rate
2007	4.0%	70%
2008	5.0%	75%
2009	5.0%	80%
2010	5.0%	85%
2011	5.0%	90%
<b>Total Increase from 2007-2011</b>	<b>24.0%</b>	<b>90%</b>

- Restore eligibility for all documented immigrants.
- Create simple systems through which working families and other groups facing hardships can apply for food stamps in a way that does not conflict with their jobs, training programs or job search and that generally minimizes potential scheduling conflicts by: allowing households to apply for food stamps at any food stamp office within the state, instead of only in their home county; minimizing face-to-face interviews; implementing an online application for food stamps; offering late evening and weekend hours for interviews and the submission of food stamps application materials; opening satellite offices for conducting food stamp interviews; and establishing drop-boxes for after-hours access.
- Coordinate among multiple benefits so that clients can apply for several programs and services simultaneously, such as public health insurance, childcare subsidies and nutrition programs.
- Eliminate the requirement that applicants for food stamp benefits provide finger images.
- Eliminate or minimize work requirements to align the program more closely with other federal benefit programs, so as to improve access for low-income families (including the newly unemployed and part-time workers) and to clarify that the Food Stamp Program is a nutrition assistance program.
- Remove the asset test for households below 130 percent of the federal poverty line by extending categorical eligibility to this population.
- Maximize all waivers that expand access, including the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) waiver.
- Ensure that the state is more aggressive in enforcing that all counties and social service districts comply fully with all federal laws and regulations regarding program access.

<sup>54</sup> Food and Research Action Center. (2006). *State of the States 2006*.  
<sup>55</sup> Children’s Defense Fund – NY. (2006). *Hunger in the Midst of Plenty*.  
<sup>56</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

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- Strengthen and coordinate food stamp outreach efforts throughout the state, including but not limited to: an expansion of food stamp outreach services to every county; the development of targeted outreach that will increase the participation of older New Yorkers, children, working families and immigrants; and the incorporation of food stamp outreach into EITC, WIC and SFSP outreach.
- Mandate and provide additional funding for the distribution of food stamp outreach materials at emergency food programs.
- Expand the distribution of food stamp outreach materials at hospitals, government offices, community food programs (senior centers, daycare centers, kids cafes, rehabilitation centers, shelters, etc.) and other services and providers that reach low-income populations.
- Include food stamp outreach materials in mailings of checks and other materials to recipients of Unemployment Insurance, EITC and disability benefits.
- Provide annual incentive awards to local social services districts that achieve the largest increases in Food Stamp Program participation.
- Increase funds for Food Stamp Program administration, which is essential to fund technology improvements and to ensure adequate staffing.
- Improve state hotlines that serve both food stamp applicants and food stamp recipients trying to access their benefits, particularly by providing services in multiple languages.
- Change food stamp notices to weed out any messages that are confusing or that discourage participation.
- Provide transitional benefits to those who have missed their TANF recertifications.

### **THE SENIOR FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM (SFMNP)**

In FY 2006, New York State received a grant of \$1,365,368 for the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, which it then distributed to elderly New Yorkers in the form of coupons.<sup>57</sup> From 2000 to 2004, however, poverty among New York State elderly adults increased by 10.8 percent.<sup>58</sup> Thus while the need has increased significantly, the SFMNP continues to be funded at extraordinarily low levels.

#### ***Policy Recommendations***

- Provide information on food stamps to each person who receives food coupons through the SFMNP.

### **SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC)**

In 2005, the average monthly participation in WIC was 482,807 for New York State.<sup>59</sup> In that year, the federal government allotted the state \$349 million in WIC funding.<sup>60</sup> As of July 13, 2006, this annual funding increased to \$350 million. The Department of Agriculture estimates that FY 2007 funding for New York State will increase to \$361 million dollars.<sup>61</sup>

While New York State's WIC grant will increase by an estimated \$12 million from FY 2005 to FY 2007, this monetary increase of 3 percent—once adjusted for inflation—represents an actual decrease of 7 percent in program funding. As funding levels continue to fall, the need for WIC has increased significantly. Between 2002 and 2004, the number of state residents living in poverty witnessed a sharp increase, rising by 9 percent.<sup>62</sup> New York State child poverty also continues to grow, increasing by 4.5 percent from 2000 to 2004.<sup>63</sup>

#### ***Policy Recommendations***

- Ensure access to a WIC site in every low-income neighborhood.
- Increase state funding for outreach, breast-feeding promotion and peer counseling.

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<sup>57</sup> Food Research and Action Center. *Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Fact Sheet*.

<sup>58</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>59</sup> Food Research and Action Center. (2006). *State of the States 2006*. March.

<sup>60</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. (2006). *WIC Funding and Program Data*.

<sup>61</sup> United States Department of Agriculture. (2006). *Focusing on the Nation's Priorities*.

<sup>62</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>63</sup> United States Census Bureau, Census 2000 and the American Community Survey 2001 - 2004.

## NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH AND SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs are authorized under the National School Lunch Act. In school year 2005, 1,299,793 New York students qualified for free or reduced-price school lunches.<sup>64</sup> Of these low-income students, 913,724 students (70.3 percent) participated in the program.<sup>65</sup> These participation rates represent a slight decrease from school year 2004. In that year, 70.9 percent of low-income students participated in the program.<sup>66</sup>

In school year 2005, 1,299,793 New York students qualified for free or reduced-price school breakfasts.<sup>67</sup> Of these low-income students, only 308,383 students (23.7 percent) participated in the program.<sup>68</sup> These participation rates represent a slight increase from school year 2004. In that year, 23 percent of low-income students participated in the program.<sup>69</sup>

While participation rates in school lunch and school breakfast continue to fall far below universal participation, the need for these child nutrition programs has grown significantly. Between 2002 and 2004, the number of state residents living in poverty witnessed a sharp increase, rising by 9 percent.<sup>70</sup> New York State child poverty also continues to grow, increasing by 4.5 percent from 2000 to 2004.<sup>71</sup>

A wide range of factors prevent full participation in these vital child nutrition programs, including economic, social, psychological, logistical and administrative barriers. Reducing the stigma associated with school meals is one of the foremost necessary steps in the effort to increase program participation. Too often children decline to participate in school lunches and school breakfasts because they fear their classmates' ridicule. Current program structure also invites distinctions between low-income and wealthier students, providing only the former with free and reduced-price meals. The availability of competitive food in vending machines and elsewhere also encourages low-income students to spend their money on less nutritious food, while further increasing the stigma associated with school meals. In addition to these administrative and psychosocial barriers, logistical and economic challenges further undermine program participation. School overcrowding very often results in excessively staggered lunch schedules, leaving some students with lunch periods shortly after the beginning of the day and immediately before day's end. Limited space and a lack of adequate staffing also impede the expansion of school meals. When school breakfast is not incorporated into the school day, parents often find it difficult to arrange for the necessary transportation, particularly low-income families with little flexibility in their work schedules. Further exacerbating each of these difficulties is the lack of awareness regarding school lunch and school breakfast among families with children, and the inability of schools to conduct effective outreach.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- Start a universal School Breakfast and a universal School Lunch Program to provide free school meals to all children.<sup>72</sup>
- Create incentives for schools to offer nutritious “grab-and-go” breakfasts and lunches at cafeteria and hallway kiosks, and incentives for breakfasts and lunches in the classroom.
- Create new funding sources to add more fruit and vegetables to the menu.

<sup>64</sup> Nutrition Consortium of New York State. (2005). *School Lunch Program Participation Statistics*.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Nutrition Consortium of New York State. (2005). *School Lunch Program Participation Statistics*.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Nutrition Consortium of New York State. (2005). *School Lunch Program Participation Statistics*.

<sup>69</sup> Nutrition Consortium of New York State. (2005). *School Breakfast Participation Statistics*.

<sup>70</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>71</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2000, 2001-2004). *Census and the American Community Survey*.

<sup>72</sup> Food Research and Action Center. (2006). *School Wellness Policy and Practice: Meeting the Needs of Low-Income Students*. February 26. Many schools can use Provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act, which reduces administrative burdens and is especially effective for schools with higher levels of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals that want to provide both lunch and breakfast to students at no charge.

## ANTI-HUNGER POLICY PLATFORM FOR NEW YORK STATE AND CITY

- Provide incentives for schools to increase the number of nutritious meals prepared on-site, which tend to be fresher and more appealing to students and would enable greater flexibility in menu planning, while allowing food service staff to respond more effectively to student preferences.
- Restrict the sale of competitive food (in snack bars, student stores, vending machines and á la carte lines) during the school day, so as to improve access to school meals and reduce stigma.
- Improve the type and form of USDA commodities that schools receive, particularly by reducing the fat and sodium levels of processed food.
- Ensure that school districts adhere to identification guidelines.
- Encourage schools to schedule lunches as close to midday as possible and to cease scheduling lunches at 10am and 2:00pm.
- Encourage schools to hold recess before lunch, which allows students to build up an appetite during recess and, consequently, eat more of their lunch.
- Be sensitive to the dietary, cultural and religious preferences and needs of students.
- Require the approval of a majority of the voters before a school district can decline to operate a School Breakfast Program.

## **SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM (SFSP)**

Although the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is an entitlement program, participation in SFSP is extraordinarily low. In New York State, 1,299,793 children live at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty line.<sup>73</sup> Of these low-income children, only 257,684 (19.8 percent) participate in SFSP.

Though participation rates in SFSP remain low, the need for this child nutrition program has grown significantly. Between 2002 and 2004, the number of state residents living in poverty witnessed a sharp increase, rising by 9 percent.<sup>74</sup> New York State child poverty also continues to grow, increasing by 4.5 percent from 2000 to 2004.<sup>75</sup>

Like school breakfast and lunch, a variety of socioeconomic, logistical and administrative barriers circumscribe SFSP participation. Complicated reimbursement processes that often underestimate program costs deter many providers from opening host sites. Children and parents often have difficulty arranging transportation to SFSP sites, particularly in rural communities and among low-income families with inflexible working schedules. Further exacerbating each of these problems is a lack of awareness regarding SFSP among low-income families with children.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

- Provide breakfast and lunch to students enrolled in summer school and create incentives for schools to offer nutritious “grab-and-go” summer meals in the classroom.
- Create new funding sources to add more fruit and vegetables to the menu.
- Provide incentives for schools to increase the number of nutritious meals prepared on-site, which tend to be fresher and more appealing to students, and would enable greater flexibility in menu planning while allowing food service staff to respond more effectively to student preferences.
- Ensure that the Education Department publicizes the program in a timely fashion by: identifying open school sites early enough to develop accurate lists for early publication, before school recess; reminding parents and students about the availability of summer meals on all school notices; involving principals, teachers and parent coordinators in the promotion of summer meals; and advertising how to access information regarding expanded sites throughout the summer.

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<sup>73</sup> Nutrition Consortium of New York State. (2006). *Summer Food Service Program Participation Statistics*.

<sup>74</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>75</sup> United States Census Bureau, Census 2000 and the American Community Survey 2001 - 2004.

## **NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON FOOD, HUNGER AND NUTRITION POLICY**

Between 2002 and 2004, poverty has increased by 9 percent in New York State.<sup>76</sup> Findings on food insecurity demonstrate that the percentage of total New York households experiencing food insecurity increased from 9.6 percent in 1999-2001 to 10.5 percent in 2002-2004.<sup>77</sup> In addition, over 2.1 million people access emergency food programs throughout the state.<sup>78</sup> In their most recent report on obesity in New York State, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention found that 19.7 percent of state residents were obese in 2000.<sup>79</sup> Coupled with low-enrollment rates in government-funded food programs and the lack of available healthy food in low-income areas, it is clear that New York is home to a growing health crisis with many roots and systematic impediments to solutions.

Given the pervasiveness and severity of each of these interrelated problems, and the inability of state government agencies to develop and implement effective strategies to combat each one in a coordinated and comprehensive fashion, New York State residents will benefit significantly from a Council on Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy. This council will coordinate the often isolated efforts of individual departments, offices and agencies, enabling the state government to develop a holistic approach to each of the aforementioned issues. The presence of this council will also ensure that at least one state government entity will be entirely devoted to food, hunger and nutrition, the success of which will be measured by improvements in these areas alone. This proposed council will not just fill a vital gap in the coordination of state policy, but will also serve as a central resource for emergency and community food providers, elected officials and the general public on all issues pertaining to food, hunger and nutrition. In times of crisis, such a council would also most effectively ensure the availability and accessibility of food, since year round it will already coordinate, supervise and direct all of the entities necessary for achieving these ends.

The purpose of this New York State Council on Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy is to develop comprehensive, coordinated state food policies with the goal of ensuring an available, accessible, affordable, safe and nutritious food supply, comprised of locally produced food as much as possible, so that all state residents are able to eat a healthy diet, avoid hunger and obesity, and have the opportunity to support a vibrant local farm and food economy.

The ongoing goals of the New York State Council on Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy are to realize the council's above-mentioned purpose of ensuring available, accessible and affordable food through: government-funded emergency food programs; government-funded nutrition programs; and long-term hunger solutions and policies. Within each of these three subcategories – government-funded emergency food programs, government-funded nutrition programs, and long-term hunger solutions and policies – the council will work to implement all policy recommendations contained herein.

In terms of structure, the council will include an advisory committee with whom it will meet on a quarterly basis. Together, the council and the advisory committee will develop ad hoc subcommittees on pressing issues throughout the year. Such a structure will preserve administrative flexibility and render the council more sensitive to current food, hunger and nutrition issues. The council and advisory committee will consist of representatives from offices, agencies and organizations involved in food, hunger and nutrition issues.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

- Create the aforementioned New York State Council on Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy.

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<sup>76</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>77</sup> Nord, M., Andrews, M. and Carlson, S. USDA Economic Research Service. (2005). *Household Food Insecurity in the United States, 2004*. (State level percentages are provided by the USDA Economic Research Service as three year averages to provide more accurate results. The increase in food insecurity among New York State households between 1999-2001 and 2002-2004 were not found to be statistically significant.)

<sup>78</sup> America's Second Harvest. (2006). *Hunger in America 2006*.

<sup>79</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2003). *Overweight and Obesity: Obesity Trends: 2001 Obesity and Diabetes Prevalence among U.S. Adults by State*.

## **EFFORTS TO REDUCE POVERTY**

The anti-hunger community can only eradicate poverty by embracing a holistic approach to the problem and by collaborating with policy advocates in the healthcare, housing and education fields, as well as with all others who combat this multi-faceted socioeconomic problem. With this paradigm in mind, the anti-hunger community lends its support to those seeking: a living wage with benefits; affordable and comprehensive universal health care; career advancement opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed; open and equal access to education and training; the creation and maintenance of new affordable housing; affordable, accessible transportation; high quality, affordable child care; a more progressive tax code; and all other forms of socioeconomic uplift. Only this holistic approach is capable of ending poverty, and only by ending poverty will hunger be eliminated.

In addition to supporting each of these aforementioned issues, the anti-hunger community will also engage in long-term anti-poverty efforts that will specifically seek to reduce hunger and improve access to nutritious food. The goal will be two-fold: to end hunger and, by ending hunger, to help eliminate poverty and all of its manifestations.

## **IMPROVE ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD**

One method of reducing hunger and improving nutrition in New York State is to address the lack of access to nutritious food. Although this problem affects all communities, low-income neighborhoods experience this lack of availability most acutely. Many local stores in these communities have, if any, a limited selection of fruit and vegetables and maintain inventories of the lowest quality food. Lack of access to fresh food therefore becomes disproportionately severe for those most likely to experience hunger. Not only do these low-income individuals struggle to afford nutritious food, they also face a far more limited supply than individuals living in wealthier communities.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

- Create a state-city agreement to fund new initiatives that would increase the supply of and access to fresh food in low-income neighborhoods by: subsidizing improvements in storage capacity at local food stores for nutritious food, specifically targeting food stores in low-income neighborhoods; subsidizing food cooperatives in every low-income neighborhood in the state; enhancing access to nutrition education in all communities through additional funding and utilization of existing resources, such as public schools, colleges, senior programs and community centers; and by enabling emergency and community food providers to purchase locally grown produce.
- Increase farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects in low-income communities.

## **FINANCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION FOR LOW-INCOME NEW YORKERS**

Constrained by limited income, it is essential that low-income New Yorkers access existing resources to ensure that they obtain the greatest possible quantity, quality and variety of basic necessities. Financial education would provide the knowledge and skill set to facilitate these financial decisions. Training programs should emphasize: how to access the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); lender programs; mortgage lending; predatory credit policies; and other areas of basic financial literacy.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

- Offer classes and training programs throughout New York State on how to access the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); banking services; wages and supplemental income; lender programs; mortgage lending; predatory credit policies; long-term and retirement financial planning; and other areas of personal finance.

## CITY POLICY GOALS

### EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EFAP)

The Emergency Food Assistance Program is a city-sponsored program that currently funds over 500 food pantries and soup kitchens throughout the city. In addition to funding food distribution, EFAP also provides administrative funding to build capacity at emergency food programs and also administers technical assistance grants for the automation of food stamp enrollment at soup kitchens, food pantries and other locations.

In 2006, the Current Modified Budget for EFAP was \$14,776,000,<sup>80</sup> while the 2007 Current Modified Budget is \$14,772,606.<sup>81</sup> EFAP has been flat-funded in recent years, though the need for the program has increased significantly. Between 2002 and 2004, poverty in New York City has increased by 8 percent.<sup>82</sup>

#### Policy Recommendations

- Increase EFAP funding by 38 percent over the next five years, to a FY 2012 funding level of \$20.34 million. To reflect the 8 percent increase in New York City poverty,<sup>83</sup> EFAP funding should increase by 8 percent over the next five years, at a rate of 1.6 percent per year (as shown in **Table 5**). To adjust for inflation, there should be an additional 5 percent annual increase in funding, resulting in a total funding increase of 6.6 percent per year.

**Table 5: Proposed EFAP Funding Increase over the Next Five Years (FY 2007 – FY 2012)**

Fiscal Year	Percent Increase	Proposed EFAP Funding
2007-2008	6.6%	\$15.75
2008-2009	6.6%	\$16.79
2009-2010	6.6%	\$17.90
2010-2011	6.6%	\$19.08
2011-2012	6.6%	\$20.34
<b>Total Increase from FY 2007 – FY 2012</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>\$5.56</b>

- Appropriate funding for emergency food programs in the event that the city experiences any decrease in outside funding.
- Ensure that all EFAP funding designated for administrative costs is provided in one lump sum to programs at the beginning of the fiscal year.
- Create an advisory council consisting of representatives of emergency food providers from all five boroughs, including nutritionists that will meet with HRA on a quarterly basis so as to advise HRA on all EFAP food purchases.
- Improve the quality of food by offering more minimally processed and fresh food, and by giving programs choice over food selection.

<sup>80</sup> Independent Budget Office. (2006). *IBO's Programmatic Review of the 2007 Preliminary Budget*.

<sup>81</sup> Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services. (2006). *Testimony before the Fiscal Year 2007 Executive Budget Hearings, City Council Committee on Finance jointly with City Council Committee on General Welfare*. May. In 2005, the actual expenses for EFAP amounted to \$13,795,338. In the 2006 Adopted Budget, \$12,485,669 was allocated for EFAP. The 2007 Executive Budget allotted \$10,415,669 to the program, while the City Council set aside an additional \$1,500,000 to EFAP in their 2007 Adopted Expense Budget.

<sup>82</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

**FOOD STAMP PROGRAM (FSP)**

Authorized under the Farm Bill, the Food Stamp Program provides vital food assistance to low-income individuals. While the participation rate in food stamps has increased in recent years, too many city residents do not access this program. Currently, the New York City participation rate is two-thirds (67 percent) of eligible individuals, meaning that one-third (33 percent) of New Yorkers eligible for the program are not enrolled.<sup>84</sup> Given that poverty in New York City has risen by 8 percent between 2002 and 2004,<sup>85</sup> increasing the participation rate for food stamps is a necessary step in reducing this growing need.

**Policy Recommendations**

- Increase the New York City food stamp participation rate to 90 percent by the end of 2011.

**Table 6: Proposed Increase in Food Stamps Participation over the Next Five Years (2007 – 2011)**

Year	Percentage Point Increase in Participation	Participation Rate
2007	3.0%	70%
2008	5.0%	75%
2009	5.0%	80%
2010	5.0%	85%
2011	5.0%	90%
<b>Total Increase from 2007 – 2011</b>	<b>23.0%</b>	<b>90%</b>

- Create simple systems through which working families and other groups facing hardships can apply for food stamps in a way that does not conflict with their jobs, training programs, or job search, and that generally minimizes potential scheduling conflicts, by: offering late evening and weekend hours for interviews and the submission of food stamps application materials; opening satellite offices for conducting food stamp interviews; and establishing drop-boxes for after-hours access.
- Maximize the authority already given by the state to reduce face-to-face interviews and eliminate finger-imaging.
- Accelerate and expand efforts to enable online applications for the Food Stamp Program, which, to date, are only available in Madison County.
- Coordinate among multiple benefits so that clients can apply for several programs and services simultaneously, such as public health insurance, childcare subsidies and nutrition programs.
- Maximize all waivers that expand access, including the ABAWD waiver.
- Ensure that the Mayor’s Office, the City Council and all government agencies work together to increase food stamp participation, and that HRA complies with all state and federal laws and regulations regarding food stamp access.
- Strengthen and coordinate food stamp outreach efforts throughout the city, including but not limited to: an expansion of food stamp outreach services to every neighborhood; the development of targeted outreach that will increase the participation of older New Yorkers, children, working families and immigrants; and the incorporation of food stamp outreach into EITC, WIC and SFSP outreach.
- Mandate and provide additional funding for the distribution of food stamps outreach materials at emergency food programs.
- Expand the distribution of food stamp outreach materials at hospitals, government offices, community food programs (senior centers, daycare centers, kids cafes, rehabilitation centers, shelters, etc.) and other services and providers that reach low-income populations.

<sup>84</sup> Children’s Defense Fund – NY. (2006). *Hunger in the Midst of Plenty*.

<sup>85</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 - 2004). *American Community Survey*.

- Provide annual incentive awards to local social services districts that achieve the largest increases in Food Stamp Program participation.
- Increase funds for Food Stamp Program administration, which is essential to fund technology improvements and to ensure adequate staffing.
- Ensure adequate staffing at government offices and application centers.
- Improve city hotlines that serve both food stamp applicants and food stamp recipients trying to access their benefits, particularly by providing services in multiple languages.
- Change food stamp notices to weed out any messages that are confusing or that discourage participation.

### **SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC)**

Local WIC sites receive WIC funding through the state, which receives appropriations from the federal government in the form of state grants. As on the state and federal levels, the local need for WIC has increased in recent years. Between 2000 and 2004, New York City child poverty rates have increased by 1.3 percent.<sup>86</sup> General poverty has also risen significantly, from 1,491,777 to 1,607,468 city residents, an increase of 8 percent.<sup>87</sup>

#### ***Policy Recommendations***

- Mandate that the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene work in coordination with the New York State Department of Health to provide oversight over the WIC program.

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<sup>86</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2000, 2001 – 2004). *Census and the American Community Survey*.

<sup>87</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 – 2004). *American Community Survey*.

## NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH AND SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS

Authorized under the National School Lunch Act, the School Lunch Program in New York City adheres to national income guidelines. In school year 2005, there were 782,411 low-income students (students living below 185 percent of the federal poverty line).<sup>88</sup> More than two-thirds (68.1 percent) of these students participated in the school lunch program.<sup>89</sup>

In New York City, all students are eligible for a free school breakfast, irrespective of household income. Nevertheless, only 19.8 percent of low-income students participated in the school breakfast program in school year 2005, meaning that well over half a million low-income students (627,130 children) did not participate in the free breakfast program.<sup>90</sup>

While participation rates in school lunch and school breakfast continue to fall far below universal participation, the need for these child nutrition programs has grown significantly. Between 2000 and 2004, New York City child poverty rates have increased by 1.3 percent.<sup>91</sup> General poverty has risen even more dramatically, from 1,491,777 city residents to 1,607,468, an increase of 8 percent.<sup>92</sup>

A wide range of factors prevent full participation in these vital child nutrition programs, including economic, social, psychological, logistical and administrative barriers. Reducing the stigma associated with school meals is one of the foremost necessary steps in the effort to increase program participation. Too often children decline to participate in school lunches and school breakfasts because they fear their classmates' ridicule. Current program structure also invites distinctions between low-income and wealthier students, providing only the former with free and reduced-price meals. The availability of competitive food in vending machines and elsewhere also encourages low-income students to spend their money on less nutritious food, while further increasing the stigma associated with school meals. In addition to these administrative and psychosocial barriers, logistical and economic challenges further undermine program participation. School overcrowding very often results in excessively staggered lunch schedules, leaving some students with lunch periods shortly after the beginning of the day and immediately before day's end. Limited space and a lack of adequate staffing also impede the expansion of school meals. When school breakfast is not incorporated into the school day, parents often find it difficult to arrange for the necessary transportation, particularly low-income families with little flexibility in their work schedules. Further exacerbating each of these difficulties is the lack of awareness regarding school lunch and school breakfast among families with children, and the inability of schools to conduct effective outreach.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- Start a universal School Lunch Program to provide free school lunch to all children.<sup>93</sup>
- Create incentives for schools to offer nutritious "grab-and-go" breakfasts and lunches at cafeteria and hallway kiosks, and incentives for breakfasts and lunches in the classroom.
- Serve breakfast at the start of the first period of the school day.
- Encourage schools to schedule lunches as close to midday as possible, and to cease scheduling lunches at 10:00am and 2:00pm.
- Create new funding sources to add more fruit and vegetables to the menu.

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<sup>88</sup> Nutrition Consortium of New York State. (2005). *School Lunch Program Participation Statistics*.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Nutrition Consortium of New York State. (2005). *School Breakfast Program Participation Statistics*.

<sup>91</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2000, 2001 – 2004). *Census and the American Community Survey*.

<sup>92</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 – 2004). *American Community Survey*.

Food Research and Action Center. (February, 2006). *School Wellness Policy and Practice: Meeting the Needs of Low-Income Students*. Many schools can use Provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act, which reduces administrative burdens and is especially effective for schools with higher levels of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals that want to provide both lunch and breakfast to students at no charge.

- Provide incentives for schools to increase the number of nutritious meals prepared on-site, which tend to be fresher and more appealing to students, and would enable greater flexibility in menu planning while allowing food service staff to respond more effectively to student preferences.
- Restrict the sale of competitive food (in snack bars, student stores, vending machines and à la carte lines) during the school day, so as to improve access to school meals and reduce stigma.
- End all city contracts between private vending corporations and school districts.
- Improve the type and form of USDA commodities that schools receive, particularly by reducing the fat and sodium levels of processed food.
- Ensure that school districts adhere to identification guidelines.
- Encourage schools to hold recess before lunch, which would allow students to build up an appetite during recess and, consequently, eat more of their lunch.
- Be sensitive to the dietary, cultural and religious preferences and needs of students.
- Ensure that free water is available at all schools.
- Redesign school cafeterias as part of the capital improvement plan for new schools and for schools that will be renovated, ensuring that children have enough space to eat comfortably and that all cafeterias are air-conditioned.

### **SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM (SFSP)**

Of the 782,411 low-income New York City students in 2005, less than one-quarter (24.4 percent) receive summer meals.<sup>94</sup> Though participation rates in SFSP remain extraordinarily low, the need for this entitlement program has grown significantly. Between 2000 and 2004, New York City child poverty has increased by 1.3 percent.<sup>95</sup> General poverty has risen even more dramatically, from 1,491,777 city residents to 1,607,468, an increase of 8 percent.<sup>96</sup>

Like school breakfast and lunch, a variety of socioeconomic, logistical and administrative barriers circumscribe SFSP participation. Complicated reimbursement processes that often underestimate program costs deter many providers from opening host sites. Poor coordination among city agencies also impedes program access. Further restricting access to SFSP programs, low-income parents with inflexible work schedules often have difficulty arranging transportation to sites. Exacerbating each of these problems is a lack of awareness regarding SFSP among low-income families with children.

#### ***Policy Recommendations***

- Ensure that some sites are open for the entire duration of time that schools are closed for summer recess.
- Open additional school SFSP sites, particularly in high-need areas, even if they do not meet the optimum level of 250 participants per day.<sup>97</sup>
- Provide breakfast and lunch to students enrolled in summer school and create incentives for schools to offer nutritious “grab-and-go” summer meals in the classroom.

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<sup>94</sup> Nutrition Consortium of New York State. (2006). *Summer Food Service Program Participation Statistics*.

<sup>95</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2000, 2001 – 2004). *Census and the American Community Survey*.

<sup>96</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 – 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>97</sup> Children’s Defense Fund. (2005). *Summer Meals for Children 2004: A Failing Grade for New York City*. School Food and Department of Education criteria for planning school sites should include: schools with summer educational or recreational programs should be open to all children in the neighborhood for breakfast and lunch; consideration of population density, such as housing projects and other low-income community locations; identification of major intersections and traffic patterns to ensure that children do not have to cross dangerous streets; and assessment of neighborhoods to ensure adequate coverage and accessibility for low-income children.

## ANTI-HUNGER POLICY PLATFORM FOR NEW YORK STATE AND CITY

- Increase the number of sites in housing projects by ensuring that the central New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) administration: provides support to Tenants' Associations in opening SFSP sites, particularly in areas where children have no access to open sites in low-income areas; provides better quality training and support to Tenant's Associations; and collaborates with the Department of Youth and Community Development's Summer Youth Employment Program to assign youth to supporting roles at NYCHA SFSP sites.
- Ensure that the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) publicizes the program by: placing posters in lobbies, at management offices and in elevators; posting notices in the NYCHA journal; putting a message at the bottom of June – August monthly rent statements; and promoting the program at Family Days.
- Ensure that the Department of Education publicizes the program in a timely fashion by: identifying open school sites early enough to develop accurate lists for early publication, before school recess; reminding parents and students about the availability of summer meals on all school notices; involving principals, teachers and parent coordinators in the promotion of summer meals; and advertising how to access information regarding expanded sites throughout the summer.
- Ensure better coordination among city agencies for SFSP.
- Incorporate adequate time for meals into summer school schedules, and ensure that all programs offer lunch before their afternoon activities.
- Create new funding sources to add more fruit and vegetables to the menu.
- Provide incentives for schools to increase the number of nutritious meals prepared on-site, which tend to be fresher and more appealing to students, and would enable greater flexibility in menu planning while allowing food service staff to respond more effectively to student preferences.
- Ensure that the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) improves the quality of meals by: requiring high quality food via the vendor bid process; monitoring the meals to ensure compliance to health and nutritional guidelines; and obtaining meals from the Department of Education.

## NEW YORK CITY OFFICE OF FOOD, HUNGER AND NUTRITION POLICY

Between 2002 and 2004, poverty has increased by 8 percent in New York City.<sup>98</sup> Findings on food insecurity demonstrate that 1.2 million New York City residents are food insecure, including 417,000 children.<sup>99</sup> An even larger number of city residents, approximately two million, are at risk of hunger,<sup>100</sup> with approximately 1.2 million accessing emergency food programs.<sup>101</sup> In 2005, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene found that 3.2 million adult city residents are either overweight or obese, representing more than half (53 percent) of the adult-age population.<sup>102</sup> Coupled with low-enrollment rates in government-funded food programs and the lack of available healthy food in low-income areas, it is clear that New York City is home to a growing health crisis with many roots and systematic impediments to solutions.

Given the pervasiveness and severity of each of these interrelated problems, and the inability of city government agencies to develop and implement effective strategies to combat each one in a coordinated and comprehensive fashion, New York City residents would benefit significantly from an Office of Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy. This proposed office would coordinate the often isolated efforts of individual departments and agencies, enabling the city government to develop a holistic approach to each of the aforementioned issues. The presence of this office would also ensure that at least one city government entity would be entirely devoted to food, hunger and nutrition, the success of which would be measured by improvements in these areas alone. This office would not just fill a vital gap in the coordination of city policy, but would also serve as a central resource for emergency and community food providers, elected officials and the general public on all issues pertaining to food, hunger and nutrition. In times of crisis, such an office would most effectively ensure the availability and accessibility of food, since it would already coordinate, supervise and direct all of the entities necessary for achieving these ends year-round.

The purpose of this New York City Office of Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy is to develop comprehensive, coordinated city food policies with the goal of ensuring an available, accessible, affordable, safe and nutritious food supply, comprised of locally produced food as much as possible, so that all city residents are able to eat a healthy diet, avoid hunger and obesity and have the opportunity to support a vibrant local farm and food economy.

The ongoing goals of the New York City Office of Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy would be to realize the office's above-mentioned purpose of ensuring available, accessible and affordable food through: government-funded emergency food programs; government-funded nutrition programs; and long-term hunger solutions and policies. Within each of these three subcategories — government-funded emergency food programs, government-funded nutrition programs and long-term hunger solutions and policies — the office will work to implement all policy recommendations contained herein.

In terms of structure, the office would include an advisory committee with whom it would meet on a quarterly basis. Together, the office and the advisory committee would develop ad hoc subcommittees on pressing issues throughout the year. Such a structure would preserve administrative flexibility and render the office more sensitive to current food, hunger and nutrition issues. The office and advisory committee would consist of representatives from offices, agencies and organizations involved in food, hunger and nutrition issues.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- Create the aforementioned New York City Office of Food, Hunger and Nutrition Policy.

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<sup>98</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2001 – 2004). *American Community Survey*.

<sup>99</sup> New York City Coalition Against Hunger. (2006). *Hunger in NYC*.

<sup>100</sup> Food Bank For New York City/Food Policy Institute. (2004). *Hunger Safety Net 2004: Measuring Gaps in Food Assistance in New York City*. Division of Government Relations, Policy & Research.

<sup>101</sup> Food Bank For New York City/City Harvest. (2006). *Hunger in America 2006: The New York City and State Report*.

<sup>102</sup> New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. (November, 2005). *3.2 Million New Yorkers are Overweight or Obese*.

## **EFFORTS TO REDUCE POVERTY**

The anti-hunger community can only eradicate poverty by embracing a holistic approach to the problem and by collaborating with policy advocates in the health care, housing and education fields, as well as with all others who combat this multifaceted socioeconomic problem. With this paradigm in mind, the anti-hunger community lends its support to those seeking: a living wage with benefits; affordable and comprehensive universal health care; career advancement opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed; open and equal access to education and training; the creation and maintenance of new affordable housing; affordable, accessible transportation; high quality, affordable child care; a more progressive tax code; and all other forms of socioeconomic uplift. Only this holistic approach is capable of ending poverty, and only by ending poverty will hunger be eliminated.

In addition to supporting each of these aforementioned issues, the anti-hunger community will also engage in long-term, anti-poverty efforts that will specifically seek to reduce hunger and improve access to nutritious food. The goal will be twofold: to end hunger; and, by ending hunger, to help eliminate poverty and all of its manifestations.

## **IMPROVE ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD**

One method of reducing hunger and improving nutrition in New York City is to address the lack of access to nutritious food. Although this problem affects all communities, low-income neighborhoods experience this lack of availability most acutely.

One of the greatest barriers impeding this access is the insufficient supply of fresh food in low-income neighborhoods. New York City's reliance on truck transportation instead of rail results in elevated transportation costs for all food products. Given that fresh food like fruit and vegetables have short shelf lives, and that to maintain a steady supply of these food products requires more frequent purchases than shelf-stable products, even marginally higher transportation costs pose a daunting economic cost to retailers in low-income neighborhoods. Many of these local stores therefore have, if any, a limited selection of fruit and vegetables and maintain inventories of the lowest quality food. Lack of access to fresh food therefore becomes disproportionately severe for those most likely to experience hunger. Not only do these low-income individuals struggle to afford nutritious food, they also face a far more limited supply than individuals living in wealthier communities.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

- Create a city-state agreement to fund new initiatives that would increase the supply of and access to fresh food in low-income neighborhoods by: subsidizing improvements in storage capacity at local food stores for nutritious food, specifically targeting food stores in low-income neighborhoods; subsidizing food cooperatives in every low-income neighborhood in the city; enhancing access to nutrition education in all communities through additional funding and greater utilization of existing resources, such as public schools, colleges, senior programs and community centers; and by enabling emergency and community food providers to purchase locally grown produce.
- Increase farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects in low-income communities.

**FINANCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION FOR LOW-INCOME NEW YORKERS**

Constrained by limited income, it is essential that low-income New Yorkers access existing resources to ensure that they obtain the greatest possible quantity, quality and variety of basic necessities. Financial education would provide the knowledge and skill set to facilitate these financial decisions. Training programs should emphasize: how to access the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); lender programs; mortgage lending; predatory credit policies; and other areas of basic financial literacy.

***Policy Recommendations***

- Offer classes and training programs throughout New York City on how to access the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); banking services; wages and supplemental income; lender programs; mortgage lending; predatory credit policies; long-term and retirement financial planning; and other areas of personal finance.