



Testimony Submitted by
Stephen Grimaldi, Executive Director, New York Common Pantry
For the Committee of General Welfare Budget Hearing
on the FY25 NYC Budget
May 29, 2024

To Members of the Committee on General Welfare:

Thank you Deputy Speaker Ayala and Members of the City Council for this opportunity to testify about the critical issue of food insecurity in NYC.

I am Stephen Grimaldi, Executive Director of New York Common Pantry, and also a representative of the Roundtable: Allies for Food Access. The Roundtable is a dedicated and collaborating network of eight (8) emergency food providers throughout NYC.

Put simply: It should be a right to have access to healthy food. What should be a right, is now a fight.

An investment in providing food means allocating resources—financial, human, and material—toward programs aimed at ensuring people have access to nutritious and sufficient food.

It confirms our values as a city of “YES;” it shows that we care about those in our city who are suffering. And, it invests in the future – by confronting food insecurity today, we help solve its attendant problems of tomorrow – poor health outcomes, poor functioning in school, mental health issues.

Unfortunately, the current proposed budget does not create a positive blueprint for the future with its extreme cuts to CFC funding. For the past two years, we saw what a difference a well-funded CFC program made. CFC provided fresh produce and increased allocations for food purchases to help us serve the increased volumes of people needing food assistance.

Last year at NYCP alone we saw the number of guests we serve rise 32%. This year that has risen another 29% and we will likely distribute more than 11 million meals.

New York Common Pantry, the Roundtable and the entire emergency food network are on the front lines, mitigating the impact of inflation and cuts to pandemic era benefits and tax credit enhancements on the numerous communities we serve.

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According to the True Cost of Living report:

- 3 million of our neighbors are considered income inadequate
- 50% of working age households do not have earnings to meet the minimum cost of living in New York City
- More than half of New Yorkers earn less than \$46,060 annually which is 200% of the poverty level for a family of three.

Do we want to see how much worse this could get? Do we want to see how devastating this would be for years to come?.

We urge the City Council and Mayor to not only restore CFC funding to its original levels but to increase funding to \$60 million for the current year, to acknowledge the growing need and to become partners with the emergency food providers to create a more sustainable and equitable food system in NYC.

Let's Invest in a Brighter Future.

Let's increase CFC, not cut it.

Let's say YES to Food Access.

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