Earlier this year, Food Bank For New York City asked its network of soup kitchens and pantries to share insights that may only be provided from hunger’s front lines. This analysis is New York City’s only set of reflections from the men and women most intimately involved in ending hunger one New Yorker at a time.

The community response to hunger in New York City is both emergency food - providing meals directly to people in need – and connecting people to public benefits to which they are entitled, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program).

SNAP is a very real solution available to our city. Each approved SNAP application in New York City is equal to a full pallet of food. 1.6 million people in New York City and nearly 2.8 million people in our state depend on it. But they aren’t alone.

Countless numbers of businesses in every neighborhood also rely on SNAP. It is a powerful generator of economic activity and development. SNAP dollars go directly into local economies because in a cash register, it functions as cash. Every dollar spent in SNAP benefits adds $1.79 to the local economy. Last year in New York City alone, that equaled over $5 billion of economic activity in the neighborhoods you represent.

The 2013 SNAP cuts has resulted in a loss of over one billion dollars intended for food for our city’s most vulnerable citizens. That amounts to 283 million breakfasts, lunches and dinners that should have been on the plates of our friends and neighbors.

These reflections provide a new perspective on the response to the daily emergency of serving people who are struggling to make ends meet in New York.

Eighty percent of the leaders of soup kitchens and pantries are seeing more visitors today than before the 2013 cuts to SNAP. The majority of the network also report seeing longer lines with more first-time visitors, senior citizens, and families with children.

While charities are already stretched in serving their community, they are doubling down by serving New Yorkers from across the city. In fact, nearly 70% of the food pantries and soup
kitchens report serving New Yorkers from more than one borough – and incredibly, nearly half serve community New Yorkers from more than two boroughs outside their own. Yet, the average emergency food program has a budget of less than $25,000 and five full time volunteers their operations regularly rely on.

Five years later, SNAP is again under attack in Washington, D.C. Some proposals for the future of the Farm Bill threaten to take food benefits away from people including seniors, working families with children, and those struggling to find consistent work. Taking SNAP benefits away from food insecure people is not only morally wrong, it doesn’t make economic sense to any of the communities you represent.

The emergency food network is not – and cannot be – the replacement for harmful policy and legislation. As advocates, community leaders, government and elected officials, we must recommit to invest in the total emergency food network, reject any policy proposal that keeps food away from hungry people and ignore anything that distracts us from citywide solutions.

Fighting hunger in New York City requires the support of our entire community, from our elected leaders and nonprofit organizations, to advocates and direct service providers.

We must elevate SNAP by articulating its powerful impact for households and businesses. We must protect eligibility for all low-income people understanding that good nutrition is a right, not a bargaining chip; and we must intentionally expand the poorest community’s access to the resources they need in the places they regularly and most comfortably attend. Hunger is solvable, and everyday our focus as New Yorkers and Americans should be to get it solved.
VISITOR TRAFFIC AT FOOD PANTRIES AND SOUP KITCHENS REMAINS HIGHER

Of those, nearly 40% of food pantries and soup kitchens reported the number of visitors increased by more than half.

80% of food pantries & soup kitchens across NYC have seen elevated traffic.

40% of food pantries and soup kitchens reported the number of visitors increased by more than half.
CONSISTENT THREATS TO THE NATION’S SAFETY NET

Need for emergency food has increased since 2013 SNAP cuts

SNAP provides an average benefit of $146 per person – enough for 39 MEALS EVERY MONTH

2017: 1 in 5 NYC residents rely on SNAP

Since 2013, cuts to SNAP have cost NYC residents more than $1 BILLION IN LOST BENEFITS
NEW YORK CITY IN A SNAP

Nearly one in five (19%) New York City residents rely on SNAP.
SNAP AND FOOD INSECURITY

Communities with the highest need do not always have high SNAP participation. Only 3 out of 10 communities with the greatest need are among the top 10 communities for SNAP participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meal Gap - Rank</th>
<th>Community Districts</th>
<th>Neighborhoods</th>
<th>SNAP Participation Rate - Rank</th>
<th>Community Districts</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>QN 12</td>
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<td>Hunts Point, Longwood &amp; Melrose</td>
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<td>Canarsie &amp; Flatlands</td>
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<td>BX 03 &amp; 06</td>
<td>Belmont, Crotona Park East &amp; East Tremont</td>
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<td>BK 16</td>
<td>Brownsville &amp; Ocean Hill</td>
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<td>BK 16</td>
<td>Brownsville &amp; Ocean Hill</td>
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SNAP'S ECONOMIC IMPACT

2017 SNAP Benefits help generated over $5 billion economic activities in New York City. The highest impact has been felt in Brooklyn and Bronx, amounted over half of NYC’s total benefits.
RISING COST OF FOOD
Since the 2013 SNAP Cuts

Food inflation increased across 5 boroughs

- 27%

In Manhattan alone, the average cost of a meal increased

- 46%

2018: Average cost of a meal in NYC is $3.73
- NYS average: $3.09
- US average: $3.00
IMPACT ON CHARITIES

This is causing a strain on our network, and the impact is being felt on the doors of our soup kitchens and pantries citywide. There is a greater burden on a smaller number of charities.

SNAP CUTS
INCREASE IN VISITORS
RISING COSTS OF FOOD
CHARITY SNAPSHOT

HUNGER SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Food Pantries: 81%
Soup Kitchens: 19%

44%
Nearly half of food pantries and soup kitchens have an operating budget under $25K a year

53%
More than half of food pantries and soup kitchens operate with non-paid staff.
CHARITY SNAPSHOT

Average number of full-time paid staff at a food pantry or soup kitchen is 1

Average number of full-time volunteers at a food pantry or soup kitchen is 5
Despite hardships on capacity, the network still finds ways to serve the most vulnerable populations. Since the SNAP cuts we have seen an increase in:

- **66%** of food pantries and soup kitchens saw an increase in: First Time Visitors
- **63%** of food pantries and soup kitchens saw an increase in: Elderly
- **62%** of food pantries and soup kitchens saw an increase in: Families with Children
Nearly 70% of food pantries and soup kitchens report serving New Yorkers from more than one borough.

Nearly half serve New Yorkers from more than two boroughs outside their own.
More than NYC food pantries and soup kitchens are experiencing food shortages since 2013.

54%

More than half of soup kitchens and food pantries reported running out of food

29%

Soup kitchens and food pantries reported turning people away because of lack of food

61% of food pantries and soup kitchens viewed lack of staff and volunteers as a threat. Expressed needing more help.
SPECIFIC FOOD NEEDS

More than **80%** of pantries and soup kitchens reported wanting more meat, poultry, fish

More than **70%** need fresh fruits & vegetables

More than **66%** need more dairy
HOW NEW YORKERS CAN HELP

Recommit to investment in the emergency food network

Reject policy proposals that keep food away from vulnerable people

Protect SNAP by articulating its powerful impact for households and businesses

Protect eligibility for all low income people
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