



Hunger Action Network

OF NEW YORK STATE

Media Release

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For More Information:
Bich Ha Pham, 212-741-8192 x. 1#
Susannah Pasquantonio, 212-741-8192 x 3#
or 917-841-7871

40 Groups Oppose Funding Cuts for Anti-Hunger Programs: Survey Reveals Emergency Food Programs Still Cannot Keep Pace with Demand for Food

Thursday, March 16, 2006, marked the 16th annual Hunger Awareness Day in New York State. Advocacy and community groups across the state organized various events to urge the New York State legislature to fund anti-hunger programs that aid hungry and poor New Yorkers. Key events included a press event at Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen in Manhattan before the daily soup kitchen service, during which the results of a survey of Emergency Food Programs were revealed. Speakers included anti-hunger and religious leaders and elected officials such as Assemblyman Joseph Lentol; Bich Ha Pham, Executive Director, Hunger Action Network of NYS; Bill Greenlaw, Executive Director, Holy Apostles; The Ven. Michael S. Kendall, Archdeacon for Mission, The Episcopal Diocese of New York (Reading Statement by The Rt. Rev. Mark S. Sisk, Bishop of New York); and Feed the Solution.

Participants released the results of Hunger Action's Needs Assessment Survey of 171 Emergency Food Programs. An overwhelming 41% of programs reported that they were forced to turn hungry New Yorkers away, reduce the amount of food distributed to each person or limit hours of operation because they lacked enough resources. 78% of responding programs reported that the most important issue affecting low-income New Yorkers is jobs and unemployment. Affordable housing is the second most important issue, with 74% of EFPs responding accordingly. Low wages as well as education and training were both the third most important issues facing poor households (68%). The next two most important issues were health care and child care. Funding was the most important issue affecting Emergency Food Programs. Space, quantity of food and demand for food were also important issues affecting food providers. For more information on the survey, contact Hunger Action.

Despite these statistics, Congress recently eliminated funds for the Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP) for the first time in over *ten years* and cut a wide array of other anti-hunger and nutrition programs. The CFNP anti-hunger program played a vital role in preventing hunger in NYS, as funding was used to increase participation in Federal Nutrition Programs including summer meals for children, provided assistance to Emergency Food Programs, administered a statewide hunger help-line, and started innovative food growing projects. Furthermore, the elimination of CFNP follows major cutbacks already made to Medicaid, Child Nutrition Programs and child care, all

275 State Street, 4th Floor
Albany, NY 12210
(518) 434-7371 • Fax (518) 434-7390
smccarthy@hungeractionnys.org

260 W. 36th St., Suite 504
New York, NY 10018
(212) 741-8192 • Fax (212) 741-7236
spasquantonio@hungeractionnys.org

of which are programs that benefit lower income households.

Hunger Awareness Day participants urged the NYS Legislature to fund a state replacement CFNP Program of \$850,000; increase the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) funding for food programs from \$22.8 million to \$30M to meet the immediate hunger needs of New Yorkers; create a statewide Food Policy Council; and, finally, enact the SEEDS bill (A2651 – Cook) to provide grants for community food security, empowerment and economic development, which would allow groups to create innovative projects that increase low income access to affordable nutritious food.

“CFNP played a major role in ensuring that more New Yorkers would have access to vital food programs such as food stamps and Child Nutrition Programs. These entitlement programs often meant not having to choose between paying for food and paying the electric bill,” stated Bich Ha Pham, Executive Director of Hunger Action Network. “At a time when nearly 1 million New Yorkers a week have to turn to emergency food, it is outrageous that food and nutrition programs were cut by over \$62 million.”

Susannah Pasquantonio, Community Food Coordinator for Hunger Action, also emphasized the need, “An overwhelming number of food programs do not have enough resources to help everyone who comes through their doors in search of emergency food. They were forced to turn hungry New Yorkers away or reduce the amount of food distributed to each person. The majority of people using food programs are the elderly and children. We need to ensure that food programs have enough food to feed hungry people and we need programs that will prevent people from having to use food pantries.” There are also a high number of working poor using Emergency Food Programs. “Emergency Food Programs report that many people are using their programs because they lack jobs or their wages are low and their housing costs are high.”

Over 40 community and anti-hunger groups recognized the day by coordinating various activities including food drives, forums, legislative visits, letter-writing campaigns, phone-ins to federal legislators and children’s anti-hunger poster projects.

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Hunger Action Network of NYS is a statewide membership organization of emergency food programs, low-income people, advocates and other individuals whose mission is to end hunger and its root causes, including poverty, in New York State.