



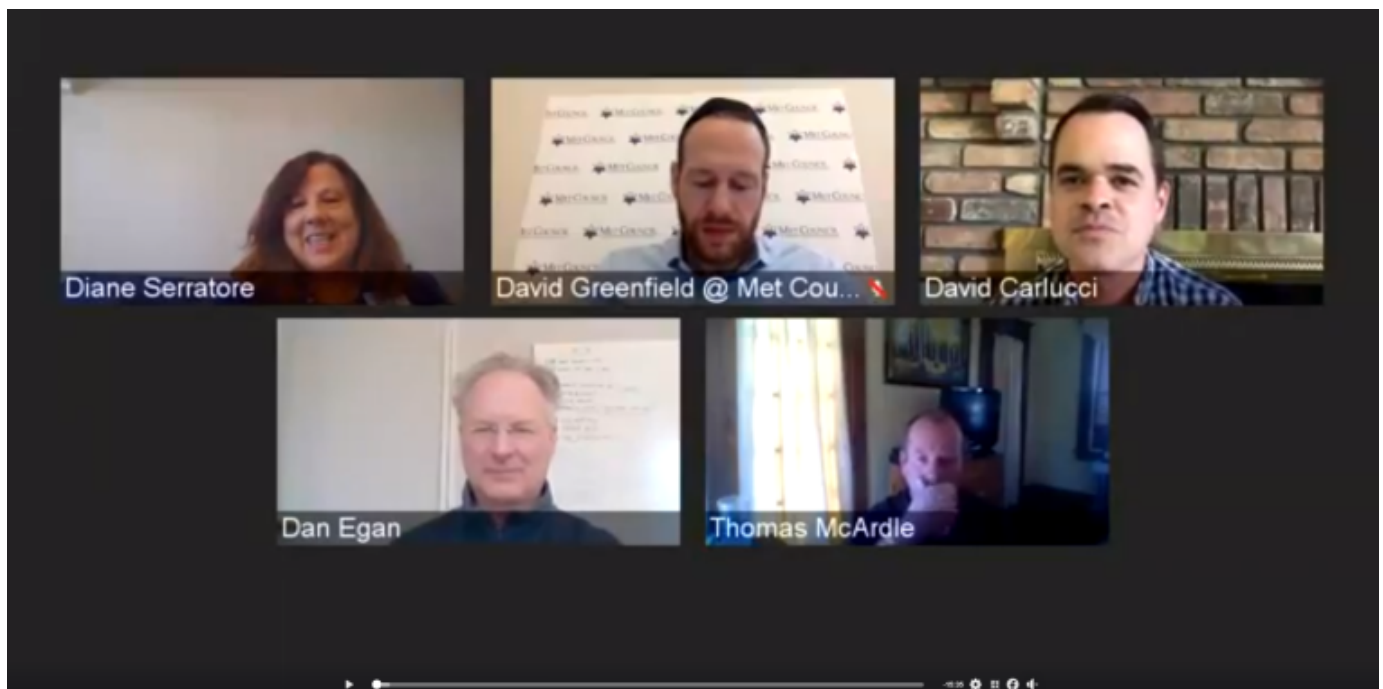
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David Carlucci

Senator David Carlucci Holds Virtual Press Conference on COVID-19's Impact on Food Banks

SENATOR DAVID CARLUCCI March 27, 2020

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(New City, NY) - Sen. David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester) held a virtual press conference on Friday about the emergency need for State funding for area food banks and pantries during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The situation is dire," **said Senator David Carlucci.** "More of New York's food banks and pantries could be closing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, if we do not get them the necessary

funding to keep feeding residents and families in need. This social safety net in our communities must be protected as unemployment soars and costs for groceries rise."

Senator Carlucci is fighting for \$25 million in emergency food funding in the New York State budget. Food banks and pantries are now dealing with higher demand and increased costs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Echoing the Senator's call for swift legislative action to approve emergency funding in the State budget are non-profit food providers, Feeding New York State, Met Council, Rockland County's food pantry, People to People, and the Ossining Food Pantry.

"We are seeing a dramatic increase in the need for our services, which happened very quickly. In a normal year, food banks around the State serve about 2.2 million New Yorkers, and now we are seeing people who are newly food insecure and those who are about to be. The entire hospitality and restaurant industries have nothing to fall back on. We are seeing increases anywhere from 40-200% in the amount of people we are serving. Volunteers who were mostly older are no longer coming to our food banks out of safety, but we are seeing more younger people which is great. We see local governments and school districts helping us along with area restaurants. We need necessary funding though for drivers and warehouse workers so we change our distribution process to meet the need, while reducing contact," **said Dan Egan, Executive Director of Feeding New York State.**

In New York City dozens of food pantries have had to close, while food banks are packing boxes and trying to deliver food with limited resources. Met Council reports a more than 50% increase just this week, in the number of families seeking food after a job loss.

David Greenfield, CEO of Met Council, said, "We have a health care crisis, and then there is an economic crisis. We are seeing record numbers of people going to food pantries, and we have

a perfect storm. These pantries are shutting down now because they don't have the resources, funding, staff, or the volunteers to operate. Plus the cost of food has gone up. If a dozen eggs was \$1.00, and increases 180% to about \$2.80, we give out 100,000 dozen eggs a week, and that's an extra \$180,000 in costs. We supply 40 food pantries in New York City and 149 special distribution sites, and we have never seen anything like this in our lives. It's vitally important that we recognize the crisis and that the State budget provide emergency funding for the 1 million plus people who will be unemployed."

In Rockland and Westchester Counties, food banks are also experiencing increased demand and are in need of volunteers.

"People to People usually helps 70-100 families a day. Yesterday, we had 140 families coming to us for help. We are seeing a large increase in the number of families who have never come to us before. Meanwhile, the people who need food can no longer come to the food bank. We are in desperate need of volunteers, and this funding is critical," **said Diane Serratore, Executive Director of People to People, Inc.**

"We are trying to be nimble and adjust to new situations. We serve about 400 families so how do we meet their needs, which are increasing, and now the new demand, which we presume will be mostly seniors. We have stopped giving out food and are trying now gift cards to minimize interaction so families can get what they need safely," **said Tom McArdle, External Affairs Coordinator of Ossining Food Pantry.**

The COVID-19 outbreak has been challenging for food banks and pantries whose vendors have been cancelling orders, raising prices and changing delivery schedules, according to Met Council.

Met Council ended up not receiving a 400,000 pound order of produce this week, and now the same amount will cost them about 30 to 50% more.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, more than 2.4 million New Yorkers were food insecure.