



2022 New York State Joint Higher Education
Committee Hearing
February 7, 2022

Testimony of Emilio Tavaréz, Director of Policy, Research, and
Advocacy, Hunger Free America

Good day. I am Emilio Tavaréz, Director of Policy, Research, and Advocacy for Hunger Free America, a nonprofit direct service and advocacy organization which is headquartered in New York City but works across New York State and the nation. I am honored to testify today in support of the Hunger Free Campus Bill (S. 1151 - Kaplan / A. 6881 - Rosenthal) and on behalf of the approximately 48 percent of City University of New York (CUNY) students struggled with food insecurity.

As a graduate of two CUNY schools, the Hunger Free Campus bill would make significant strides in mitigating food insecurity among college by giving colleges the funding needed to raise awareness and increase enrollment in existing on-campus resources and underutilized public benefits. The most impactful and cost-effective way for the State to fight hunger is to increase participation in the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called the Food Stamps Program). At SUNY, for instance, only 23% of SNAP-eligible students have even considered applying for benefits. Raising awareness about these programs and providing enrollment assistance would allow students to claim the millions of federal dollars that are currently on the table unused, helping them secure access to healthy food. If current caseloads and benefits levels stay stable, federal SNAP spending in New York State this year would be \$8.8 billion, which would equal 176 times the amount of funding (\$50 million) that Governor Hochul has proposed spending on Nourish New York this year. If the State did more to work with nonprofit groups on SNAP outreach and access, and was able to raise the SNAP caseload and SNAP spending by merely five percent, that would equal \$440 million in extra federal spending on food relief, nine times the cost of Nourish NY.

It is important to note that, not only is every penny of SNAP benefits paid for by the federal government, but any State money also spent on approved SNAP outreach and enrollment activities – including money sub-granted to nonprofit groups for such purposes – is matched 100 percent by the federal government. Expanding the capacity of institutions of higher education to

increase participation in this program is an easy way of getting more federal dollars into New York's Economy.

We have many more recommendations for how reducing hunger throughout the state, and for all these reasons Hunger Free America urges your support for the Hunger Free Campus Bill S. 1151/A. 6881 and an included appropriation of \$20 million/2 years into the state budget this fiscal year.

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