



**Testimony to the
Joint Fiscal Committees on the SFY 2023-2024 Executive Budget
Human Services**

**Submitted by:
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding the Executive Budget proposal for Human Services, and specifically, its impacts on efforts to end hunger in New York.

Hunger Solutions New York is a statewide anti-hunger organization dedicated to alleviating hunger for all New Yorkers. Our organization's primary approach to addressing hunger is to maximize participation in the federally funded nutrition assistance programs, namely, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; the School Breakfast Program; the National School Lunch Program; the Summer Food Service Program; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

We base our perspective on our 35+ years of experience managing the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) through a contract with NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). NOEP is New York State's foundation to improve food security across the state. Through a network of well-trained, successful, and committed community-based organizations, NOEP provides outreach and free and confidential application assistance to help low-income New Yorkers access the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other federally funded nutrition programs.

SNAP is the state's largest anti-hunger program, helping more than [2.8 million](#) New Yorkers access benefits to supplement their monthly food costs. SNAP provided benefits to [851,000 children](#) and [685,000 seniors](#) in New York in 2020, and [57,000 NYS veterans](#) as of 2019. Still, many more New Yorkers are eligible but not participating. NOEP helps close the gap, ensuring New York is fully leveraging federal resources to support food security for its residents.

The FY22-23 Enacted Budget funded NOEP at \$4.22 million, including a \$1 million increase from previous funding levels to support expanded services. This additional state investment enabled fourteen new SNAP assistors in high-need and rural areas, along with expanded remote services statewide. This year, the program is on track to reach more than 134,000 potentially eligible New Yorkers with information about SNAP, and to help more than 26,000 households receive SNAP benefits as a direct result of NOEP services.

However, in the absence of sustained funding, NOEP will be forced to scale back those impactful expansions at a time when rising food costs and the expiration of temporary federal supports – including SNAP emergency allotments, Pandemic-EBT, and universal free school meals – have led to a steep hunger cliff for many New Yorkers.

The FY2024 Executive Budget proposal includes \$3.3 million in NOEP funding, a **reduction of nearly \$1 million from the FY22-23 Enacted Budget**. Without added investment from the legislature, the following counties will lose some or all local NOEP services:

- Erie County, Monroe County, and all boroughs of New York City will lose local SNAP assistors added in FY2022, despite continued high need.
- Chemung County, Cortland County, Essex County, Franklin County, Lewis County, and Schuyler County will lose all local NOEP services.

To avoid devastating reductions in services amid an ongoing hunger crisis, New York State must restore and build on its previous anti-hunger investments.

Needed Investments to Alleviate Hunger in New York

We urge the legislature to adopt the following proposals to support food security in New York:

- **Increase funding for NOEP to \$5.22M – a \$1.92M increase from the Executive Budget proposal – restoring and building on previous state investments.**

This investment will enable NOEP to sustain expanded services funded in the FY22-23 Enacted Budget, and further bolster services statewide. A total of \$5.22M will allow NOEP to:

- Increase availability of local SNAP assistors in counties with high need.
- Expand remote services to ensure households in all areas of the state have access to NOEP services.
- Support outreach and resources to help senior service providers connect more eligible older New Yorkers with SNAP.
- Scale up proven strategies to increase access to federal child nutrition programs, including school meals, summer meals, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program, vital federally funded supports for the estimated [one in seven children](#) in New York struggling with food insecurity.

NOEP has a uniquely high return on investment for New York:

- Each state dollar invested in SNAP outreach is federally matched, dollar-for-dollar, by USDA SNAP outreach funds, drawing down federal funds to support the state's effort.
- In recent fiscal years, NOEP has provided at least a 27-fold return on investment to New York State, based on federal SNAP benefits coming into the state as a direct result of NOEP services.
- NOEP is an on-the-ground partner to OTDA, taking administrative burdens off the LDSS/HRA system. Applications completed with NOEP assistance are easier for LDSS/HRA staff to process because they are complete and accurate; an estimated 86% of NOEP-completed applications are approved. NOEP has contributed to New York's success in achieving low error rates and receiving bonus payments.

- SNAP helps alleviate poverty. In FY2021, an estimated [620,000 New Yorkers](#) were lifted from poverty as a result of SNAP, including 249,000 children.
 - Maximizing SNAP supports New York’s economy. SNAP is an important revenue source for the [16,000+](#) SNAP retailers in NYS. During weak economic times, every [\\$1 in SNAP generates \\$1.50](#) in economic activity.
 - Ensuring the federally funded food security foundation is as strong as possible frees up the state’s investment in the emergency food system to meet residents’ emergency – not chronic – food needs.
- **Establish and fund a statewide Healthy School Meals for All program, ensuring access to free school breakfast and lunch for all students.**

Though funding for school meals falls outside of the Human Services budget, we urge all members of the Legislature – particularly those committed to meeting the needs of low-income New Yorkers – to support this critical, far-reaching anti-hunger investment. The expiration of federal funding for universal free school meals has been devastating for New Yorkers. Across the state, 726,000 students lost access to free school meals at the start of this school year. Nearly 2,000 schools returned to means-testing for meals, an inequitable and stigmatizing system that leaves many children behind, including those whose families are struggling to make ends meet, but are just above the income guidelines for free school meals – less than \$51,400 for a family of four – and those who qualify, but fall through the cracks due to stigma and administrative barriers. New York can close the gap by establishing [Healthy School Meals for All](#), providing an estimated \$187M-\$201M in state funding to cover costs not already covered through federal school meal program reimbursements. Funding free school meals for all children is a concrete way to support families, providing an estimated \$140/month per child in grocery savings. Other states have already implemented similar policies, recognizing the vital importance of school meals for food security and educational and health equity. New York can and must join the states leading the way on this critical support for children and families.

- **Provide level funding of \$250,000 for outreach and assistance for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).**

CACFP is a federally funded nutrition assistance program that provides healthy meals and snacks to low-income children in child care centers, family day care, and afterschool programs. Currently, only 50% of New York’s licensed or registered day care and afterschool providers participate in CACFP. The FY2024 Executive Budget proposal maintains New York’s investment of \$250,000, budgeted through the Office of Children and Family Services, for outreach and technical support to help eligible child care providers apply for and fully leverage CACFP.

- **Fund Nourish New York at \$75M and the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) at \$63M** to support New York’s emergency food system of food banks, food pantries, emergency shelters, and community-based organizations.

Hunger Solutions New York strongly urges the legislature to adopt these proposals in the final budget. These investments will allow New York to continue to support low-income families and individuals and further efforts to reduce hunger across the state.