



10 Davids Drive (Harry Chapin Way)  
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### Joint Legislative Hearing – Health

Testimony of Long Island Cares, Inc.—The Harry Chapin Food Bank  
Michael W. Haynes, Vice President for Government Relations & Advocacy  
Feb 28, 2023

As you are all well aware, the pandemic increased demand for emergency food assistance. **In February of 2020, there were approximately 260,000 food insecure Long Islanders. By the dawn of 2021, there were over 400,000 Long Islanders who did not know where their next meal was coming from.**

In our role as the Regional Food Bank for Long Island we adapted to meet the need. In 2020, we distributed a record 18 million pounds of emergency food and household supplies. In 2021, we distributed 14 million pounds. In 2022, we distributed 11 million pounds. Before COVID, we distributed between 8 and 10 million pounds of nutrition and supply assistance annually.

#### **We were able to do more because we had more support.**

The federal government increased The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) funding to give the nation's food banks unprecedented levels of commodity support. This provided necessary economic stimulus to farmers across the nation, as well as equipped the nation's food banks with the food needed to keep pace with record surges in demand. **In 2020, Long Island Cares distributed 7.9 million pounds of TEFAP commodities, and in 2021, we distributed 5.5 million pounds of TEFAP products. Before COVID, we typically distributed approximately 3 million pounds of TEFAP commodities.** *We administer TEFAP on behalf of USDA for the Long Island Region (Suffolk and Nassau Counties).*

In 2020, New York State created Nourish New York. This program provides food banks in New York State with funding to purchase locally sourced produce, proteins, and dairy. **Thus far, greater than 4,000 New York farms have benefited from this program, while millions of New Yorkers have been able to eat healthy New York-grown food.** This program fights hunger and strengthens our State's diverse agricultural sector. **In addition to buying fresh produce from across the State, Long Island Cares has used greater than \$400,000 to purchase fish and support Long Island fishers.**



*"To know is to care. To care is to act. To act is to **make a difference.**"*  
- Harry Chapin, Founder, Long Island Cares

**In 2022, Governor Hochul and the State Legislature increased the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program budget by \$22M to \$56.5M.** For more than 30 years, HPNAP program has helped improve nutrition security for hungry New Yorkers through healthy food procurement, storage and distribution, and operational expenses. **This historic investment provided Long Island Cares with an additional \$1.8M, of which \$1.5M was used to purchase additional food and \$300K was used for operating expenses, which support the provision of these foods. This additional support helped us to distribute 40% more HPNAP foods, as well as strengthened our infrastructural needs and that of our member network (local food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters).** We were so grateful for this necessary support during a prolonged period of increased demand for our services.

**The support is going away, but the need is not.**

**The proposed Executive Budget brings HPNAP back down to its pre-COVID funding level of \$34.5M. This \$22M cut means less food and less operational support for the entities distributing this critical food. Nourish New York is flat funded at \$50M, which while not a cut, feels like a cut during these inflationary times. Food banks such as Long Island Cares saw a 40% cut in TEFAP commodities in 2022.** This is the main reason our 2022 distribution total was less than our 2021 total. Distribution going down was not a reflection of an improving hunger landscape. It was a result of less support at a time when need remains high. **In fact, at our community satellites alone, demand for our services increased by 58%.** These numbers closely mirror that of our diverse agency base. Not only are food banks across the state receiving less support. **The people we serve are going to be receiving less federal support starting in March with the expiration of SNAP Emergency Allotments. The end of Emergency Allotments means that every SNAP household will see a decrease of at least \$95 in monthly SNAP benefits and many others will see an even larger decrease.** For example, if a household of 4 has a regular SNAP benefit of \$650, their monthly EA is \$289, and they will see a \$289 decrease in monthly benefits. **This will impact approximately 155,000 Long Islanders and 3 million New Yorkers overall.** This will increase demand for each food bank in New York State.

**Food banks, such as Long Island Cares, are receiving less federal commodity support and this proposed 63% cut to HPNAP means they are slated to receive dramatically less state support as well.** *This is at a time when supply chain disruptions are still prevalent, food costs have risen by 11% over the last year, and the people we serve are going to see their federal benefits significantly cut.*

**The bottom line is that food pantry lines are about to get a lot longer.**



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**This is why we at Long Island Cares stand with our Feeding NYS colleagues in calling for HPNAP funding to be set at \$63M to reflect the 11% percent increase in food costs over the past year and Nourish New York funding to be set at \$75M.** With this additional funding, food banks can do a better job feeding the three million New Yorkers who rely on food banks to make ends meet. It will also provide necessary economic stimulus to farmers and fishers throughout the State and will drive down health care costs by lessening the incidence of diseases and conditions associated with food insecurity. This is why hospitals are partnering with food banks across the state to “prescribe” nutrition assistance to patients upon discharge.

Respectfully submitted by,



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