



# The Alliance

for a Hunger Free New York

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## **Food Charities, Advocates Call on Governor Hochul and Legislature to Increase State Efforts To End Hunger**

### ***Annual People's State of the State continued by newly formed Alliance for a Hunger Free New York***

(Albany, NY) – A newly formed coalition, The Alliance for a Hunger Free New York, continued the 31-year tradition of the Annual People's State of the State event by calling on Governor Kathy Hochul and the State Legislature to take concrete, expanded actions to end hunger and food and nutrition insecurity statewide in New York. The event was held outside the State Assembly in the Capitol Building the day before the Governor's scheduled State of the State.

With more than 2.1 million New Yorkers facing hunger, including one in six children living in homes that can't afford enough food, food pantries from across the state, policy advocates and other community-based food assistance organizations, and those with lived experience came together to share stories, statistics, and the state of what is happening right now in New York's charitable food system, along with recommendations about what the Governor and the State Legislature need to do to help – through the New York State budget and programs.

In New York's Capital Region, The Food Pantries for the Capital District Executive Director Natasha Pernicka called attention to the more than 80% of food pantry members in the region reporting increased service levels, with 45% not feeling that they have adequate funding to provide services to their community. "Inflation is not only driving increased service to community members in need," she said, "but it is also impacting food pantry operations to keep shelves stocked. Our fuel expense to distribute food nearly doubled in 2022."

"It is well past time that we evolve anti-hunger efforts beyond any dated notions of singular models, methods, or ideologies of operating in isolation to end hunger in New York, across America, and abroad," said Chef Greg Silverman, CEO of West Side Campaign Against Hunger and Founder/director of The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access, both in New York City. "The Roundtable: Alliance for Food Access in NYC is proud to support the statewide Alliance for A Hunger Free New York as its coalition works collaboratively on the frontline, community by community, across the state to fight hunger."

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He added, “Working collectively is the only way to address the daily, direct, intense food insecurity needs of our family, friends, and neighbors across New York. In 2023 the state needs to increase funding to \$63 million for HPNAP (Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program) and to \$50 million for NourishNY. These funds will support anti-hunger organizations with the necessary resources to fight hunger together across New York State.”

Renee S. Fillette, Ph.D., executive director of Dutchess Outreach, said, “Forming a collaborative of food security providers is perhaps the single most important initiative since the beginning of emergency food relief services. For decades, agencies have operated in silos without the benefit of learning from one another. Together, we can, and will, advocate for strong policies to benefit all New Yorkers, inspire best practices within our communities, and support each other as we learn and grow together. As the executive director of a food-security organization in the Mid-Hudson Valley, this is what we have been waiting for.”

“Historically high inflation and continued supply chain issues have made feeding our families incredibly challenging and, for those who were already living on the edge, near catastrophic. No one should have to make hard decisions on whether to buy food or pay rent or get prescriptions or heat their homes or buy their children clothes, etc. These same stressors affect our ability as emergency food providers to help people who are struggling to bridge those gaps. The decrease in food donations and the cost of everything going up has seriously strained our resources and ability to serve those who need it most,” said Les Aylesworth, director of CHOW, Broome County Council of Churches.

“Charitable food distribution programs perform vital, heroic work filling in some gaps in the safety net and should be provided adequate food and funding,” said Joel Berg, CEO of Hunger Free America, a nationwide direct service and advocacy organization headquartered in New York. “But it’s vital to understand that direct food distribution, even if expanded, can only meet a small portion of the food needs of struggling New Yorkers. That’s why, to truly end hunger in New York State, we need bold, comprehensive public policies to slash poverty, boost economic opportunity, ensure living wages, boost tax credits, and guarantee adequate safety net programs like SNAP, WIC, and school meals.”

“Working people are struggling with the cost of inflation and barely making ends meet. The food pantries are struggling to feed people in desperate situations. We need the state government to step up and increase HPNAP,” said Mark Emanation, executive director, Capital District Area Labor Federation.

Collectively, The Alliance for a Hunger Free New York is working to make sure food pantries and other on-the-ground hunger relief organizations have resources to operate to meet current needs, while advocating on big picture policies and programs to end hunger.

### **Budget Recommendations to Support the Charitable Food Assistance Sector**

Due to the increased number of individuals and families seeking assistance from food pantries across New York State, the financial strains of inflation on food pantries, and the continued supply chain struggles to keep pantry shelves stocked, we strongly encourage New York State to increase the following:

- **Increase funding for HPNAP (Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program) to \$63 million**
- **Increase funding for NourishNY to \$50 million**

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### Recommendations to Support Ending Hunger

Federal and state policy, funding, and programs have the ability to end hunger and provide access to resources and food without pushing solutions to meeting this basic need and human right onto the backs of underfunded charities. We strongly encourage New York State to:

- **Provide free healthy school breakfast and lunch to all students in public schools**
- **Supplement Federal SNAP/WIC programs to increase access:**
  - to immigrants and working poor who are not eligible at a federal level
  - by providing free home delivery of groceries purchased with SNAP/WIC online to those who have transportation or other access barriers
- **Fund Food as Medicine interventions through Medicaid, including:**
  - Medically Tailored Meals
  - Medically Tailored Groceries
  - Fruit and Vegetable Prescriptions
  - Food and Nutrition Access Case Management Services

### About The Alliance for a Hunger Free New York

Formed out of a partnership between The Food Pantries for the Capital District's NYS Community Food Assistance Network and the Hunger Action Network of New York State, The Alliance is a collaborative effort of community-based food assistance providers and stakeholders to reduce food insecurity in New York State. The Alliance convenes stakeholders, coordinates collective impact activities, provides a forum for information sharing, and is a network to increase capacity and nutritious food supply to direct food assistance equitably and efficiently to our communities. We are a voice for community-based food assistance providers and our community members experiencing food insecurity.

#### The Alliance Steering Committee

- Broome County Council of Churches/CHOW, Broome County
- Comfort Food Community, Warren/Washington counties
- Concerned for the Hungry, Schenectady County
- Dutchess Outreach, Dutchess County
- Hunger Action Network of New York State, NYS
- Hunger Coalition of Otsego County, Otsego County
- Hunger Free America, National
- Interreligious Food Consortium, Syracuse/Onondaga counties
- Westside Campaign Against Hunger/The Roundtable, New York City
- Rockland Community Against Hunger, Rockland County
- The Food Pantries for the Capital District, Albany/Rensselaer/Saratoga/Schenectady counties

### About The Food Pantries for the Capital District

Working together to feed the hungry in our community for more than 40 years, The Food Pantries for the Capital District is a coalition of 70 food pantries ( <https://thefoodpantries.org/about-us/our-member-food-pantries/> ) located in New York's capitol region of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties. Collectively, our coalition provided groceries to approximately 52,000 people for more than 2.4 million meals in 2021.