



# WEST SIDE CAMPAIGN AGAINST HUNGER

**Testimony: Farm Bill Listening Session  
November 3, 2017**

Good afternoon, my name is Chef Greg Silverman and I am proudly here today, representing West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH) and our community of almost 9,000 families. Thank you so much for giving us the time and attention to listen to our words and I truly hope we can move from words to sustainable actions to support the 1.7 million NYers in need. Simply put, I am here for our community members who are struggling to put food on the table. **We urge Congress to create a strong Farm Bill with more support for TEFAP and to strengthen, not decimate, SNAP**—the largest poverty alleviating program in the US. We reject any cuts to SNAP because it is the first line of defense against hunger – food pantries and soup kitchens are the last line of defense, and must be protected at all costs.

Founded in 1979, West Side Campaign Against Hunger is the country's first supermarket-style, multi-service food pantry, and one of the largest emergency food providers in New York City. In the last year, we provided nearly 1.5 million pounds of food, which included over 300 thousand pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables, to nearly 9,000 households. We are part of TEFAP network and receive over 200,000 dollars worth of food from TEFAP... this program needs to be grown, but with better and healthier foods. ASK: We join with the Nation's network of emergency food providers and food banks to ask for \$350 million in annual TEFAP food purchases and \$100 million in annual storage and distribution funds. But this must be done with dignity, not with sub-human "foods" like this "beef" stew with over 20% of DGA of sodium and 23% of saturated fat per 8oz serving, that is presently part of TEFAP and is from my perspective as a human, a expert in food and nutrition, and a chef... not food. I am here to advocate for growing services and support but it must be done with dignity and health. In truth, our customers come to us for more than calories, they come for healthy groceries and to be part of a community. WSCAH combines access to healthy food with entitlement benefits, job training, and policy advocacy to work in partnership with our customers by emphasizing their right to self-determination and dignity.

Our community and our organization works with the national and local networks to support hungry NYers across programs—from our seniors attending school breakfast rallies, to our corporate volunteers passing out summer meals flyers, and our culinary arts program working with local WIC clinics to deliver nutrition education.

As the country's first supermarket-style food pantry, we offer 5—not 3—days of food based on a customer's family size, in tandem with SNAP, health insurance, SCRIE/DRIE and eviction prevention, to name a few, to not only alleviate hunger, but to alleviate and reduce reliance on the emergency food system as a whole. In FY 2017, WSCAH enrolled 690 families in SNAP,

which has far greater capacity than emergency food providers to meet the needs of those who are food insecure. The emergency food system is tired, old and broken... it was never designed to replace SNAP as the first defense against hunger. SNAP does in two months what emergency food providers do in a year, and therefore, it plays an irreplaceable role in ending hunger.

Each month at the end of the month, our pantry lines grow exponentially, and our customers tell us why: their SNAP benefits have run out. They come from all across the city to get healthy food to feed their families. Families like Terry's—a single mom whose disabled son comes with her, not only to get food, but to volunteer with our team to help the rest of the community. Our community is made of 9,000 strong families—changemakers working hard each and every day to survive and to help each other prosper.

The 690 families we enrolled in SNAP last year are a smaller representation of the approximately 1.7 million residents in New York City who rely on SNAP. Any cut in SNAP whatsoever would without a doubt adversely impact New Yorkers in all five boroughs. The proposed White House budget would cut more than \$193 billion to SNAP over 10 years. Consequently, the proposed cuts to SNAP would increase demand on emergency food programs like WSCAH, all across the city. We cannot fill the gap that will be made by SNAP cuts.

Once again, West Side Campaign Against Hunger would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify about the need to oppose any and all cuts to SNAP and to increase support for truly healthy emergency food provided by TEFAP.