

THE ROUNDTABLE

ALLIES FOR FOOD ACCESS

Representative X

Address

Address

Date

Dear [Representative X],

The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access is a dedicated network of emergency food providers in New York City collaborating to bring more resources to communities, so none of our neighbors go hungry. Across our network, in 2022 alone, we served over 52 million meals to over a million New Yorkers in need. We are very concerned that Governor Hochul's Executive Budget proposal includes a \$22 million cut to funding for the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP), reducing the FY2024 budget to \$35 million, a nearly 40% cut. Food insecurity was exacerbated during the pandemic and communities are still recovering. At the same time, the cost of food has gone up and public supports like emergency allotment SNAP, the Child Tax Credit, and extended unemployment are no longer available. HPNAP funding allows for emergency food providers state-wide to provide a vital lifeline that allows families to put healthy meals on the table.

The HPNAP RFA process happens in 5-year cycles, and existing and new providers had to reapply this year. This is against the backdrop of all food banks, soup kitchens and food pantries dealing with the impact of the increase in need. In addition, Nourish NY, a grant promoting the purchase of New York State grown food, is now tied to HPNAP funding, making the stakes for any individual grant award even higher.

The NYS Department of Health had to make funding decisions based on a reduced budget, completely defunding organizations in underserved communities around New York City that are still seeing long lines and increased need. Many food pantries and soup kitchens with long-standing HPNAP contracts were not funded for this 5-year cycle, including four members of The Roundtable who collectively lost nearly \$1.5 million in HPNAP funding. These organizations have increased their distribution of meals and expanded services to meet community need. Hunger in New York City continues to be a major challenge for families as the causes of hunger remain. Without these funds, millions of meals will be missed across tens of thousands of households in our city. The impact will be immediately felt starting July 1, 2023. These communities will continue to feel this impact for five years, since there is no ability to re-apply for these funds until the 5-year cycle renews. The organizations that did receive HPNAP cannot possibly make up for the deficit of millions of meals that these cuts represent.

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Together, all the members of The Roundtable ask you to fund HPNAP at a level of \$63 million per year, and Nourish NY at \$75 million per year. When the additional money is allocated, organizations that had their funding cut should have HPNAP and Nourish NY funding restored. We also ask that this funding be added as a charter amendment for the 5-year term of the grant so that the funding does not need to be renegotiated year after year. The budget negotiation process is still ongoing but is expected to be completed very soon. There is still time left to ensure that the Governor's office understands the importance of this funding to our communities.

Since 2018, members of The Roundtable have worked together to fight hunger in NYC, pursuing opportunities for collective purchasing and collaborative advocacy work. Current Roundtable members include West Side Campaign Against Hunger, Met Council, New York Common Pantry, Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen, Project Hospitality, St. John's Bread and Life, POTS, and The Campaign Against Hunger. Together we envision a city where emergency food providers have greater capacity and autonomy to meet the demand of their communities and offer more nutritious, culturally relevant food. At the same time, we want to see both New York City and New York State reimagine their investments in emergency feeding programs with reduced administrative burden, streamlined reporting, and additional flexibility.

Sincerely,

[Add Signatories]

