



Testimony Submitted by

Martina Santos, Board Member of the West Side Campaign Against Hunger

For the General Welfare Hearing on the FY25 NYC Budget

Thank you to General Welfare Committee Chair Diana Ayala for holding today's hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Martina Santos and I live in the Bronx, New York.

Currently, I attend the West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH) food pantry as a customer, volunteer, and board member. I have been visiting WSCAH for over 14 years, where I initially came as a customer because my income was very low, and I couldn't afford to buy food that would take me the whole month. When I first came to WSCAH, I immediately noticed the quality of the food WSCAH distributes to its customers. That day, I went home with a smile, as I brought with me fresh fruits and vegetables, protein, grains, milk, which I was able to choose myself during my visit. The experience of being able to choose food made me feel worthy, as I was able to put aside the stigma of visiting a food pantry.

WSCAH has become a home for me, as almost immediately from my first visit, I became a pantry volunteer.

WSCAH's mission is to alleviate hunger by ensuring that all New Yorkers have dignified access to healthy food selection and support services.

Last year, WSCAH distributed over 4 million pounds of healthy food for its 80,000.

I've had the opportunity to help this work grow.

For example, seven years ago WSCAH had one distribution point and now WSCAH has more than 30 distribution points and is also delivering directly to over 1500 homes. My greatest satisfaction is being able to refer family, neighbors, friends and even strangers to the WSCAH pantry because I know they will find not only a wide variety of fresh and healthy foods, but also empathetic treatment from the WSCAH team.

As a WSCAH volunteer, I have been able to feel the sad reality of hunger and need that exists in our city. I am pleased to be able to help, together with WSCAH, so that the tens of thousands of New Yorkers who annually visit WSCAH, do not go to bed hungry. I have witnessed for more than 14 years how WSCAH's work has become indispensable to many in our community, but unfortunately it is a job that requires a lot of effort and financial support.

The mayor's recently released Preliminary Budget Plan is set to cut [Community Food Connection program](#) (CFC) by over \$30 million dollars from \$57 million [to \\$25 million](#) this year. WE can't feed our community with these cuts. Please restore CFC to a level that can help our community.

Our city administration must provide an additional \$35 million in FY 2025 and \$39 million in FY 2026 and in the outyears to restore and strengthen Community Food Connection funding.

Please help us to help our community, restore CFC!!!

Martina Santos
Board Member
West Side Campaign Against Hunger