



NEW YORK

**Testimony before the New York State Assembly Committee on Ways and Means and
Senate Committee on Finance**

regarding the

New York State Executive 2024-2025 Budget for Human Services

January 31, 2024

Submitted by No Kid Hungry New York

Introduction

My name is Rachel Sabella and I am the Director of No Kid Hungry New York. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding the impact of the proposed NYS budget on childhood hunger and nutrition. .

First, we thank the New York State Assembly and the New York State Senate for your stalwart commitment to protecting New Yorkers from food insecurity. The Legislature has long been a leader in addressing food insecurity, from supporting Breakfast After the Bell, expanding no-cost school meals, and leading the charge for increased baselined funding for food pantries and soup kitchens, to implementing the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program and Online Purchasing with SNAP benefits. We are grateful to count you as our partner in the fight against food insecurity.

No Kid Hungry New York is a campaign of Share Our Strength, a national organization dedicated to ending hunger and poverty. Using proven, practical strategies, our No Kid Hungry campaign builds and supports public-private partnerships to ensure children have access to the healthy food they need, every day. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, No Kid Hungry provided more than \$9 million in emergency grants and support in New York and Puerto Rico to help schools, food banks, and other community organizations feed kids during the crisis. In addition to our grant-making, we also offered strategic assistance to hundreds of local organizations and advocated for policies to address the unique barriers and unprecedented level of need brought

on by the pandemic. Since 2011, our No Kid Hungry New York campaign has helped connect millions of children across the state with school breakfast and summer meals.

No Kid Hungry New York believes that all children, no matter their neighborhood or circumstance, should be nourished and safe, so they can live up to their full potential and achieve their dreams. Adequate nutrition, both at school and at home, helps lay the foundation for a child's physical and emotional development, educational attainment, and health and well-being. Years of research have demonstrated that federal nutrition programs are our nation's most effective defense against hunger and food insecurity and have helped lift millions of families out of poverty.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024 NEW YORK STATE BUDGET

Allocate \$13M for Summer EBT administrative costs.

Beginning in the summer of 2024, the federal government has authorized a permanent, nationwide Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (Summer EBT). Summer EBT will provide a grocery benefit during the summer months to families with students eligible for free or reduced-price school meals – a total of \$120 per eligible child during the summer months. Like SNAP and Pandemic EBT, funds will be provided on a debit-style EBT card to allow families to purchase food. We estimate approximately 2 million children in New York are eligible for this benefit.

For many children in our state, the end of the school year marks the end of consistent and reliable meals. This abrupt disruption can lead to a decline in nutritional intake, which can cause physical and mental health problems and lead to poor educational performance when school begins again. Food banks routinely experience an increase in demand from families with children during the summer months, when the loss of school meals and higher utility bills reduce resources for food. The Summer EBT program is proven and effective at reducing very low food insecurity among children during the summer.

Summer EBT is also an investment in the New York economy, as more purchasing power for low-income New York State families generates economic activity for agriculture, food retailers, and manufacturers and creates jobs across multiple industries. Summer EBT presents an opportunity to boost local economies and build a more resilient local food system.

Federal funding will cover 100% of the Summer EBT benefits. For New York families that's more than \$200 million for food purchases funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The program requires states to cover half of the administrative costs, and for New York State that will be \$13M. No Kid Hungry is proud to see that the NYS Executive Budget includes

this funding. We urge the Legislature to work closely with the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to promote the program to eligible children across the state. It is critical for the state to engage in robust outreach plans so eligible families enroll and use the benefit this summer.

In addition to administrative funds for Summer EBT, we also urge the Legislature to support funds for the following programs that will help to address hunger in New York State –

- **\$64 million for the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP);**
- **\$75 million for Nourish New York;**
- **\$5.053 million for the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP); and**
- **Full Funding for Healthy School Meals for All NY Kids.**

NEW YORK STATE HUNGER SURVEY

An April 2023 No Kid Hungry poll of New Yorkers showed that many New Yorkers report experiencing hunger in the past 12 months due to a lack of money or other resources. The numbers are impactful, particularly among parents of school-age children.

Here are some of the key findings:

- Over a quarter (26%) of New Yorkers had to decide between purchasing food versus another necessity, such as utility bills, rent, or gas. As one respondent from the Bronx wrote, “I had to choose between feeding my children or paying my light bill because there just isn't enough food resources out here.”
- Over half (56%) of New Yorkers worry they would be unable to afford groceries if faced with an unexpected \$500 expense.
- A majority (67%) of New Yorkers say it has become harder to afford groceries for their household in the past 12 months.

Residents across New York State continue to face economic challenges. As you deliberate the 2024-2025 New York State budget, we urge the Legislature to prioritize funding programs that ensure no New Yorker faces hunger. No Kid Hungry New York stands ready to work with the Legislature, Governor Hochul, and our fellow New Yorkers to ensure all children and families have access to the food they need to thrive.