



Written Testimony Presented by
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to the

Senate Finance Committee
and the Assembly Ways & Means Committee

Regarding Human Services provisions included in the FY 2026
Executive Budget

February 12, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairpersons Krueger and Pretlow, Ranking Members O'Mara and Ra, my name is Gregory May, and I am the Director of Government & Community Relations at Island Harvest Food Bank. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding the SFY 2026 Executive Budget during the Joint Legislative Hearing on Human Services.

Gov. Kathy Hochul has included in her budget incredible investments in the emergency food system and programs designed to alleviate hunger and food insecurity. Budget items that directly impact Island Harvest are her inclusion of level-funding from last year in the Hunger Prevention & Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) and Nourish NY. This funding, approximately \$56 million and \$54 million, respectively, allowed Island Harvest to **provide more than 3,100,000 pounds of food to Long Islanders in need last year.**

While this is an incredible amount of food, we want to note that according to Feeding America's *Map the Meal Gap*, there were approximately 221,000 Long Islanders living with food insecurity in 2022, the last year for which data is available. This number represents a staggering increase of 58% from 2021; we expect the next round of numbers analyzing food insecurity on Long Island to be worse.

During our last fiscal year, we distributed more than 18.3 million pounds of food. This fiscal year, we are on track to distribute more than 20 million pounds of food. The need for emergency food is increasing and is set to eclipse the need we saw at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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We are requesting that the State Legislature recognize this increase in need by investing \$75 million in HPNAP and \$75 million in Nourish NY for a total investment of \$150 million in the emergency food system during SFY 2026.

Island Harvest Food Bank applauds the Governor for including universal school meals in her budget. The State Legislature and the Governor have made significant investments in school meals in the previous two budgets. With the Governor's proposal, and support of the Legislature, this will be the year every student in New York State receives a free, healthy breakfast and lunch when school is in session.

If passed in the budget, this program will benefit approximately 135,000 students on Long Island, making a dramatic positive impact on every family's budget.

Not included in the budget, but a priority for Island Harvest, is the SNAP Minimum Benefit Program, A1318/S665 introduced by Member of Assembly Jessica González-Rojas and Senator Rachel May.

This bill strengthens the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by providing program participants with a minimum benefit of \$100 per month. Under current federal law, \$23 per month is the minimum amount people can receive in SNAP benefits. With this new program, New York State will provide the difference between a person's monthly federal SNAP benefits and \$100; a maximum of \$77 per eligible person per month.

SNAP supports individuals, families, and our local businesses. Increasing these benefits has a compounding effect, giving our neighbors choice and flexibility in their diet, local grocery stores additional business, and reduces the strain on food banks like Island Harvest. Please consider including this program in your budget proposals.

Island Harvest Food Bank is a leading regional human services organization whose mission is to end hunger and reduce food waste on Long Island. Our work directly supports seniors, children, families, and veterans who turn to us in times of crisis through our direct service, mobile outreach program, and food distribution work. We also support a network of more than 300 community-based nonprofit organizations and emergency feeding programs across Long Island.

I am available to discuss this testimony with any member of these Committees, gregory@islandharvest.org at your convenience.

Thank you.

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