

## APPENDIX: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to these findings, the Coalition recommends a plan with government actions at the federal, state, and city level to end hunger in New York City and in the nation:

### 1. END CHILD HUNGER

No child should go to bed hungry. There are a multitude of national child nutrition programs already in place that need modifications to be more effective. As childhood obesity becomes a growing concern, policymakers need to acknowledge the connection that obesity and hunger are interconnected. As we alleviate child hunger, we will alleviate child obesity.

#### Federal Recommendations:

- ➔ Pass a Child Nutrition Reauthorization in 2010 that will:
  - Make universal, in-classroom school breakfasts standard in public schools. *This would reduce stigma around school meals and increase participation in the breakfast program.*
  - Fund universal school lunches. *This would simplify access to school meals.*
  - Expand direct certification for school meal eligibility to include participants in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program and Medicaid recipients. *This would ensure that children in low-income families are automatically enrolled in the free/reduced price lunch program without having to apply.*
  - Make WIC an entitlement program and fund nutritional improvements to the WIC package. *This would ensure that all qualifying applicants for WIC receive benefits and ensure that WIC has an independent source of funding.*
  - Expand the WIC child certification period to one year to reduce paperwork among applicants. *This minimizes complicated paperwork among applicants.*
  - Not take away funding from other federal nutrition programs like SNAP. *There are current proposals to find funding for CNR by cutting funding in the SNAP program, which is also vital to ending child hunger.*
  
- ➔ Expand funding for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). *This would ensure that more children, who rely on school meals throughout the school year, continue to receive food throughout the summer.*

#### New York State Recommendations:

- ➔ Support the Women, Infants, and Children Program by ensuring access to a WIC site in every low-income neighborhood. *The WIC program assists expecting and young low-income mothers in obtaining food, referrals, and nutrition education. This would make WIC more accessible to low-income communities.*
- ➔ Increase state funding for outreach, breast-feeding promotion and peer counseling. *This would support early childhood health and wellbeing.*

#### New York City Recommendations:

- ➔ Expand the Breakfast in the Classroom program to every classroom and mandate that it be used as part of instructional time. *Teachers are wary that breakfast in the classroom would take away from instruction time, although several districts have incorporated nutrition lessons into breakfast, thus making it instructional.*
- ➔ Protect and expand the universal school lunch program.
- ➔ Expand outreach on the Women, Infants, and Children program and summer meals.

## 2. INCREASE MINIMUM WAGE, WITH FUTURE INCREASES INDEXED TO INFLATION

Low-income earners are workers. By strengthening wage laws (such as living and prevailing wage laws), policymakers would ensure that workers can support themselves.

## 3. BUILD A STRONG SAFETY NET

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) is a critical component to the U.S. safety net. Unfortunately, it is widely underutilized. Several improvements would make SNAP a more effective assistance program for low-income people.

### Federal Recommendations:

- ➔ Improve the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program by:
  - Simplifying applications. *Lengthy applications prolong the process and increase chance of administrative errors.*
  - Increasing the average benefit amount. *The allotment of benefits is based on the concept that SNAP is a supplement to other food spending, when it is not always the case.*
  - Eliminating additional work requirements on able bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs). *The requirements prevent jobless adults from obtaining food stamp benefits as they are seeking work.*
  - Removing special restrictions on legal immigrants. *Legal immigrants currently have to wait five years to apply for this program.*
  - Eliminating the state/municipal requirements that applicants submit a finger-image to receive benefits. *Currently, Texas, Arizona, California, and New York City require all SNAP applicants to undergo finger imaging. This process costs states/cities money, is proven to be an ineffective way to prevent fraud, and has shown to deter applicants from applying for benefits because finger imaging is associated with criminal activity, and prolongs the application process by requiring applicants to go to administrative offices.*
  - Eliminating face-to-face interviews. *This would eliminate the travel time and lost work time that many applicants give up to go to interviews.*
  - Combining the application for SNAP with other public benefits. *To ensure that people receive the various benefits to which they are entitled, a universal application or data sharing would minimize paperwork/multiple applications.*
  
- ➔ Support emergency feeding programs such as The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP). *These are the federal programs that support food pantries and soup kitchens with food and funding. As this report shows, federal nutrition assistance through these programs is critical.*

### State Recommendations:

- ➔ End the special exemption under which New York City is the only part of the state that still requires finger imaging for food stamps. *The State legislature has the authority to change Social Services Law to eliminate the use of finger-imaging.*
- ➔ Require all municipalities, including New York City, to accept a waiver to enable ABAWDs to continue to obtain SNAP benefits while looking for work for up to 12 months. *The waiver would eliminate work requirements that prevent jobless adults from obtaining food stamp benefits as they are seeking work.*
- ➔ Increase funding for the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP). *HPNAP provides financial support from the State for emergency food providers- it is frequently on the chopping block for budget cuts.*

### New York City Recommendations:

- ➔ Increase the New York City SNAP participation rate to 90 percent by the end of 2012. *This would ensure that more eligible New Yorkers receive the benefits to which they are entitled.*

- ➔ Eliminate the finger-imaging requirement for SNAP applicants.
- ➔ Simplify household access to SNAP by expanding office hours, opening satellite offices for SNAP interviews, and minimizing face-to-face interviews. *This would make SNAP more accessible to applicants.*
- ➔ Coordinate benefit programs so that clients can apply for several programs and services simultaneously. *Through data matching or a universal application, people should be able to apply for multiple benefits at once.*
- ➔ Accept ABAWD waivers for SNAP applicants. *The waiver would eliminate work requirements that prevent jobless adults from obtaining food stamp benefits as they are seeking work.*
- ➔ Increase funding for Emergency Food Assistance Program and create an advisory council to advise HRA on all EFAP food purchases, and improve the quality of food served by offering more minimally processed and fresh food. *EFAP provides city funding for emergency food providers.*
- ➔ Expand the Paperless Office System (POS) sites which allow food stamps applicants to be screened for food stamps in a social service site in their neighborhood rather than a government office. *POS sites provide comprehensive enrollment assistance and alternative hours for working families, while supporting city agencies by filtering out ineligible applicants and reducing client-side issues related to documentation.*

#### **4. PROMOTE INCREASED ACCESS TO HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE FOOD**

Too many people live in a place without physical and financial access to healthy food that they can afford.

##### **Federal recommendations:**

- ➔ Promote farmer's markets, community gardens, and community supported agriculture (CSA) projects and increase their interaction with the SNAP and WIC program. *Farmer's markets and CSAs should be both physically and financially convenient to low-income communities- they should allow people to pay for food with SNAP benefits.*
- ➔ Expand nutrition education and obesity-prevention activities. *Nutrition education and activities encourage healthy eating and lifestyles.*
- ➔ Maintain strong support for Wholesale Farmer's Markets. *Wholesale farmer's markets encourage buyers, like stores and restaurants to support local farm economies.*

##### **State Recommendations:**

- ➔ Promote farmer's markets, community gardens, and community supported agriculture (CSA) projects and increase their interaction with the SNAP and WIC program.
- ➔ Expand nutrition education and obesity-prevention activities.
- ➔ Maintain strong support for Wholesale Farmer's Markets.

##### **New York City Recommendations:**

- ➔ Support New York City FoodWorks Initiative. *FoodWorks is a City Council effort to use the New York City's food system to create jobs, improve public health, and protect the environment.*
- ➔ Incorporate food into PlaNYC. *Food planning should be included in the long-term vision for New York City.*
- ➔ Promote farmer's markets, community gardens, and community supported agriculture (CSA) projects and increase their interaction with the SNAP and WIC program.
- ➔ Expand nutrition education and obesity-prevention activities.
- ➔ Maintain strong support for Wholesale Farmer's Markets.