



To: Obama/Biden Transition USDA Review Team

From: Joel Berg, Executive Director, New York City Coalition Against Hunger

Date: December 22, 2008

Subject: **How the Economic Recovery Bill Can Address the Current Domestic Hunger Crisis and Boost the Effort to End Child Hunger by 2015**

I am writing on behalf of the 1,200 soup kitchens and food pantries in New York City (two-thirds of which currently don't have enough food to meet the growing demand) – and the more than 1.3 million low-income New Yorkers forced to use such emergency food programs.

I strongly support the request of Representative James McGovern and many other Members of Congress to ensure that the economic stimulus bill will include at least \$29 billion in additional anti-hunger/nutrition assistance funding, including more funding for:

- the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps);
- the Emergency Food Assistance Program (also including necessary funds for the shipping and handling of the food);
- the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program;
- the Commodity Supplemental Food Program;
- senior nutrition programs; and
- the School Breakfast and Lunch Programs (to provide initial funding for improvements to be made in the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Bill).

On top of that funding, money should be allocated to the HHS Community Food and Nutrition Program, a still-authorized program for which funding was zeroed-out by the Bush Administration; this program is one of the few sources of federal funding for nutrition program outreach and other activities carried out by grassroots anti-hunger nonprofit groups. The bill should also include additional funding for states and counties to handle increased SNAP caseloads, provided that none of these additional funds is used for any procedures that restrict program access such as finger-imaging. Reagan adviser Martin Feldstein, Clinton administration Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, and Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke all agree that increased federal spending on nutrition assistance benefits is actually one of the best ways to stimulate the economy.

Furthermore, the bill should include a strategic fund to provide grants and bridge loans to a wide variety of social service nonprofit organizations, so that these groups may maintain ongoing vital services for which they have recently lost funding due to the recession.