



Testimony Submitted by
Chef Gregory Silverman, Executive Director
West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH)

Testimony at oversight hearing on agency procurement in compliance with Local Laws 50
(Brewer) and 52 (Dickens) of 2011

January 14, 2020


My name is Chef Gregory Silverman and I am the Executive Director of the West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH). Thank you for inviting WSCAH to testify at this oversight hearing on agency procurement of items that are locally grown or produced in New York state in compliance with Local Laws 50 (Brewer) and 52 (Dickens) of 2011 Welfare.

I am here today, representing West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH) and our **community** of almost 12,000 families who come to us from across NYC to gain access to healthy food and supportive services. Founded in 1979, West Side Campaign Against Hunger is the country's first supermarket-style, multi-service food pantry, and one of the largest emergency food providers in New York City. The West Side Campaign Against Hunger alleviates hunger by ensuring that all New Yorkers have access with **dignity** to a **choice** of healthy food and supportive services.

In the last year, we provided over 1.6 million pounds of food, which included over 600 thousand pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables, to nearly 12,000 households. Our customers are overjoyed that we serve 41% fresh produce, this is unheard of anywhere else in NYC, let alone the United States. Fresh, healthy, appetizing produce helps us battle not only short term food insecurity but support the health and well being of families in need. As the speaker has said, ***"Access to adequate nutritious food is a human right..."***

Over the last year, WSCAH along with several other large emergency food providers in NYC created a collective purchase initiative to help get better, healthier products at better prices for our communities. WSCAH along with Project Hospitality, New York Common Pantry, and St. Johns Bread and Life, with support from Robinhood, Sea Change Capital and NY Health Foundation and with consultants, Karen Karp and Partners created this initiative as our customers and agencies demand better food for themselves, their families and their communities.

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Emergency Food Providers such as WSCAH pushed a collective purchase program partly because programs such as the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) are not providing the necessary choice of products agencies and communities want or need. At WSCAH we survey our customers, they demand healthy food, fresh food, local food, organic food, all the same foods that any New Yorker wants and needs. Our job is to provide our customers access with dignity to a choice of healthy food and supportive services.





EFAP has been touted as a huge win in NYC with its 22 million dollar baseline in the budget. But let us be clear that this 41% fresh, healthy, nutritious, produce we distribute at WSCAH does not come from EFAP. EFAP distributes 22 million dollars of processed foods to New Yorkers in need. There is no ability within EFAP to give any choice of fresh product or any incentive to purchase New York State product to any New Yorkers and this is a tragedy for the health and dignity of our NYC community!

Altering EFAP to perform its efforts more like HPNAP (The New York State Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program), with greater choice of products and incentive for more local purchasing will help increase health of not only our customers, but the economic health of our city and region. Procurement of items, in our case via EFAP, that are locally grown or produced in New York state is not only helpful for our community but should be viewed as necessary and in compliance with Local Laws 50 (Brewer) and 52 (Dickens) of 2011. These laws allow for incentivizing local purchasing and tracking of those purchases.

Truth be told, our WSCAH community of 22,000 customers care less about plans and bills. Our community care firstly about getting healthy food for their family and feeling safe and supported. Our city, state and federal government are not taking care of this. Over 73% of our customers who are part of WSCAH are LatinX, many first generation immigrants and in a sanctuary city such as New York, they do not feel safe or supported. Every week customers ask to get taken off SNAP and Medicaid due to fear about immigration issues. In NYC these friends, neighbors, colleagues are refusing public sector benefits and prefer to be supported by charity. Charity can not and will never take the place of a strong public sector safety net.

Creating offices and policies is important but today in America, our community demands protection and support. Elected officials must stand up, not with words, but with actions to gather funds and support for all the people living, working, and surviving in NYC. Using Local

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Laws 50 (Brewer) and Local Law 52 (Dickens) in conjunction with making strong adjustments to programs such as EFAP will do much to support our communities.

The West Side Campaign Against Hunger would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today. WSCAH and our community look forward to helping continue to strengthen our food system as a core piece of helping make sure we provide all New Yorkers access with dignity to a choice of healthy food and supportive services.

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