

My name is Chef Greg Silverman, CEO of West Side Campaign Against Hunger & Founding Director of The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access. The Roundtable is a dedicated network of emergency food providers in New York City pursuing opportunities for collective purchasing with the goal of procuring more high-quality and culturally appropriate food at better prices. This work includes collective bulk purchasing as well as ongoing price data gathering to make informed purchasing decisions, saving money and time, and improving data transparency.

Today I raise two urgent needs that must be addressed in the City's FY24 Budget, **1) Increase funding for the Community Food Connection program to \$59 Million, and 2) Ensure that any cuts in headcount vacancy at HRA do not impact benefits enrollment nor eliminate frontline positions.**

Our members are now seeing higher demand for emergency food than ever before due to sky-rocketing food, fuel and housing prices. During the last quarter of FY22, West Side Campaign Against Hunger experienced a 42% increase in the demand for food as compared to the previous year and the demand is nearly double what it was prior to the pandemic. Based on our price tracking we also saw that from 2021 to 2023 the price of pasta went up 43%, canned tuna up 28% and a dozen eggs up 141%. In the face of this reality, the City's current investment in Community Food Connection, formerly known as the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP), is simply not sufficient. As of February 2023, many of our members reported being nearly through their CFC allocations for the fiscal year. **We urge the Council to push for the FY24 budget to increase funding for a total of \$59 Million baselined for the Community Food Connection program.** We do applaud HRA for working with a CFC advisory group of practitioners to inform administration **but we call on them to compensate practitioners for their time.**

Our communities are in absolute crisis, the charity sector and emergency food will not solve it! Beyond money for food, the city must do all it can to make sure our customers have access to the benefits they deserve. Nothing should be done by city to slow down benefits enrollment or increase burden on our customers.

To that end, many of our members provide benefits enrollment assistance and are concerned about recent reports that HRA is processing just [46.3% of applications for SNAP](#). **We urge the Council to fight to ensure that any cuts in headcount vacancy at HRA do not impact benefits enrollment and that frontline positions are expanded no** t



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eliminated. We are in a crisis and the city wants to cut back on accessing federal funds, its absurd and shocking. We also urge HRA to increase wages to help fill these critical vacancies and improve internal systems to be more efficient.

Please reach out with any questions about our written testimony that includes additional detail. Thank you for your consideration.