



**New York City Council**  
**General Welfare Committee – Hearing on Food Insecurity**  
**Testimony submitted by Joanna Mendez, Assistant Director of Public Policy**  
**Monday, April 13, 2026**

On behalf of Children's Aid, I would like to thank Chair Crystal Hudson and members of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on food insecurity.

For over 170 years, Children's Aid has been committed to ensuring that there are no boundaries to the aspirations of young people and no limits to their potential. Today, nearly 2,000 dedicated full and part-time staff members serve nearly 50,000 children, youth, and families across more than 40 sites in New York City. Through our early childhood centers, community schools, community hubs, and health clinics, Children's Aid creates trusted, neighborhood-based spaces where families can access the full range of supports they need.

Children's Aid's addresses food inequities and improves health outcomes for children and families in low- and moderate-income New York City communities through our Go!Healthy programs. We engage families in nutrition education, healthy food access, culturally responsive activities, food resiliency, and gardening education. Notably, Go!Healthy's nutrition education is supported by federal SNAP-Ed funding.

Despite the demonstrated importance of SNAP-Ed to preventive health efforts and its broad national success, the federal government eliminated this funding through H.R.1. As a result, New York City stands to lose not only a statewide network of educators, but also a deeply embedded set of programs operating in schools, community centers, food access hubs, and human-service providers across the city.

**Recommendation to the General Welfare Committee on Food Insecurity:**

- **Respond to the Loss of SNAP-Ed funding:** Coordinate a Citywide response to the elimination of SNAP-Ed by providing bridge funding of \$5 to \$7 million and align the Human Resources Administration (HRA), the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP), New York City Public Schools (NYCPS), the Department of the Aging (DFTA), and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to mitigate nutrition-education and food access gaps that increase reliance on the emergency food system.

**The Importance of SNAP-Ed Programming to New York City**

Our food and nutrition education program, Go!Healthy, examines food systems through a health equity lens, advancing food justice by providing education, leadership, and job opportunities. Each year, we serve over 3,000 individuals, including 1,665 participants in nutrition education. Go!Healthy tackles food insecurity in City Council districts 7, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 49, and 50 by providing access to affordable, fresh, and healthy foods. Since 2003, Go!Healthy has promoted wellness through programming such as nutrition education, culinary demonstrations, gardening, and food box distribution.



Within the Go!Healthy program, SNAP-Ed funding facilitates programming that plays a central role in our work in the South Bronx, Harlem, Washington Heights, and the north shore of Staten Island, which host communities that consistently face some of the highest rates of food insecurity and nutrition-related health conditions in the City. SNAP-Ed enables Children's Aid to offer steep discounts on locally grown fruits and vegetables, deliver interactive, evidence-based nutrition education workshops led by qualified nutritionists for youth and families, and operate school and community-based distribution sites where families can pick up both their children and fresh foods. This integrated model is only made possible through SNAP-Ed's funding.

For three decades, SNAP-Ed has played a key role in advancing New York's public health and food access goals. In neighborhoods across the five boroughs, SNAP-Ed helps New Yorkers stretch their food dollars, navigate rising food costs, and make informed decisions about what they eat. Through partnerships with community-based organizations, schools, and local partners, SNAP-Ed delivers practical, culturally relevant education and connects New Yorkers of all ages to fresh, affordable foods in the communities where they live, work, and learn. In July 2025, H.R.1 completely eliminated SNAP-Ed funding nationwide. For New York State, this resulted in a \$29M loss of funding for these vital programs.

The scale of SNAP-Ed's impact is significant for New York families. In FY25, New York City SNAP-Ed providers reached more than 1.558 million participants and more than 79,000 nutrition workshops, many of them in New York City schools, after-school programs, and community-based organizations. Participants also reported significant life changes, including 57% who improved fruit and vegetable intake, 57% who increased physical activity, and 58% who engaged in more price comparisons while food shopping. Overall, household food security improved by 25% after participating in SNAP-Ed programming.

These outcomes are especially important for New York City as more households struggle with high food prices, reduced SNAP benefits, and anticipated changes in Medicaid eligibility. Every \$1 invested in SNAP-Ed saves up to \$9.54<sup>1</sup> in future healthcare costs—savings that directly benefit a City system already under strain. Losing SNAP-Ed programming now would increase demands on City-funded services, from emergency food programs to public hospitals, and would undermine the City's own strategies around prevention, chronic disease reduction, and community health. SNAP-Ed is one of the most effective tools to provide families with the nutrition education, skills, and support needed to stretch limited food dollars and maintain healthy diets even as federal benefits decline.

Since federal funding was terminated, many providers have already begun laying off staff and winding down programming, as ongoing uncertainty about SNAP-Ed's future makes it impossible to sustain operations or plan for upcoming program cycles. Without the City's support, these programs will fully cease operations by September 2026. Absent action, the City

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<sup>1</sup> University of Illinois Extension. (2023, June 13). Available at: [Creating healthier Illinoisans: SNAP-Ed generates up to \\$135 million in future benefits | Serving Calhoun, Cass, Greene, Morgan and Scott Counties | Illinois Extension | UIUC](#)



risks a rapid erosion of the infrastructure, partnerships, and neighborhood-level trust that has taken decades to build.

We strongly urge the inclusion of all affected providers in any City investment toward sustaining vital SNAP-Ed programming, and we recognize that many other organizations across the city are facing the same crisis. To help mitigate the immediate impact of the federal elimination, Children's Aid has applied for \$200,000 in City discretionary funds to support this work. In addition to our individual discretionary request, we urge the City to act at scale to preserve the work of all City community-based organizations being terminated by SNAP-Ed:

- **Fund SNAP-Ed Continuation:** Establish City bridge funding of \$5 to \$7 million to continue SNAP-Ed operations through community-based providers, so families retain nutrition education and cost-saving skills, preventing avoidable strain on HRA programs.
- **Align HRA, MOFP, NYCPS, DFTA, and DOHMH to mitigate nutrition education and food access gaps** that push more families into emergency food assistance.

### **Closing**

At a time of continued economic pressure and federal uncertainty, New York City cannot afford to retreat from its commitment to children and families. Children's Aid sincerely thanks the Committee for its leadership and partnership. We welcome the opportunity to serve as a resource as budget negotiations move forward. Please feel free to contact Joanna Mendez, Assistant Director of Public Policy, at [jmendez2@childrensaidnyc.org](mailto:jmendez2@childrensaidnyc.org) with any questions regarding this testimony.