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CONTACT:
Nicole Aber, (646) 627-7741,
Naber@hungerfreeamerica.org

**Despite Economic Boom, 1 Million NYC Residents
Still Struggle Against Hunger Due to High Rents**

34% of NYC Soup Kitchens and Food Pantries Lack Needed Resources

Nearly 1 in 10 Metro New York Residents Can't Afford Enough Food

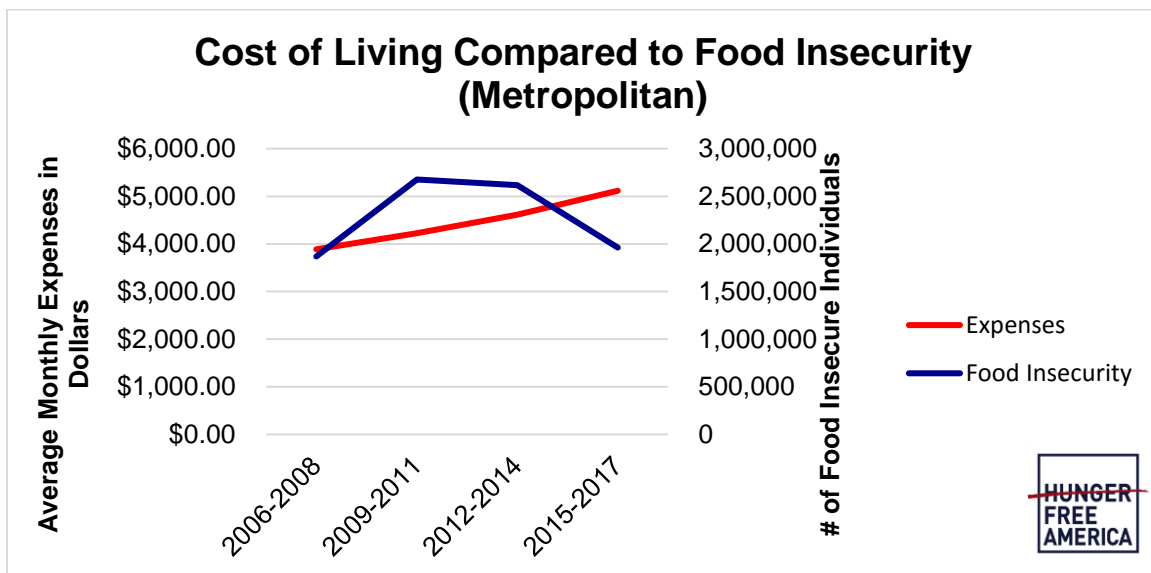
**Advocates Call the High Cost of Living in
New York an “Affordability Crisis”**

The number of people unable to afford an adequate supply of food decreased in New York City, the Metropolitan region, and New York State over the last six years due to rising wages and low unemployment, but because the costs of housing and other basic living expenses are so high, hunger is just as high now as it was before the recession, according to a new report by the nonprofit group, Hunger Free America, based on an analysis of federal data.

The study found that in New York City, the number of people living in food insecure households — unable to afford an adequate supply of food — decreased by nearly 27 percent during the past six years, declining from 1.42 million people in 2013-2015 to 1.04 million in 2016-2018. However, one in eight city residents still struggled against hunger.

In the New York City Metropolitan area (including New York City and suburbs in New York State, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania), the number of people struggling against hunger decreased by 24.5 percent during the past six years, declining from 2.5 million people in 2013-2015 to 1.9 million in 2016-2018, the report shows. However, more than 9 percent of Metropolitan region residents still struggled against hunger. And in 2016-2018, 10.7 percent of the state’s population suffered from food insecurity, including 15.2 percent of all children, 6.9 percent of all employed adults, and 6.5 percent of older residents (ages 60+).

“Because so many New Yorkers earn too little to keep up with soaring costs for housing, health care, child care, and other basic costs of living, a million of them struggled against hunger,” said Joel Berg, CEO of Hunger Free America, at an event at Neighbors Together in Brooklyn this afternoon. “Between 2005-2008 and 2015-2017, the cost of living in New York City went from an average of under \$4,000 per month to more than \$5,000 per month. During that time, food insecurity levels soared as the recession took its toll. It is only in the last three years that we have seen food insecurity rates return to pre-recession levels, which are still sky-high.”



Brooklyn contains the highest number of individuals living in food insecure households, reaching 377,475 people in the 2016-18 time period. This number includes 12.6 percent of children, 8.6 percent of employed adults, and 11.4 percent of older residents (ages 60+).

Hunger Free America’s report contains data from the organization’s annual survey of NYC emergency food programs, which showed that food pantries and soup kitchens in the city fed 10 percent more people in 2019 than in 2018. In Brooklyn, a soaring 65 percent of emergency food program respondents reported an increase in the overall number of people served compared to 2018. Additionally, nearly 29 percent of organizations reported having to turn people away due to a lack of resources in the last year.

Denny Marsh, Executive Director of Neighbors Together — which provides an average of 400 free meals to Brooklyn residents each day — said at Monday’s event, “In the wealthiest city in the world, 1 in 8 New Yorkers are struggling to afford food. In Neighbors Together’s low-income area of central

Brooklyn, that figure becomes 1 in every 2 residents. Coupled with the fact that the homelessness crisis in our city has reached an all-time high, the disparity of resources is unconscionable.”

Nearly 29 percent of respondents to Hunger Free America’s survey reported witnessing an increase in immigrants utilizing their services as a result of disenrollment from the SNAP program. Many respondents also commented on the effects of the Trump Administration’s “Public Charge” rule, with more than one-third of respondents having reported encountering immigrants who are afraid to utilize food programs out of fear that it may impact their immigration status.

Berg continued: “The only way to end U.S. hunger is to help Americans better afford food, both by raising wages and ensuring a federal nutrition assistance safety net that is adequately-funded and easy-to-access, including benefits such as: SNAP (formerly known as food stamps); meals on wheels and senior center meals for older Americans; WIC for pregnant women and infants; and school breakfasts, lunches, and summer meals for children. Americans also need to be able to easily access affordable childcare, housing, and health care.”

Marsh added, “While organizations like Neighbors Together are grateful that the issue of hunger is highlighted during the holiday season, the truth is that millions of our neighbors are struggling to afford food and housing every single day of the year.”

Other findings of the study:

- While food insecurity among working adults declined, most likely due to minimum wage increases, the area is still facing a “working hungry epidemic.” The number of adults working, but still struggling against hunger, in 2016-2018, was 300,718 in New York City, 632,768 in New York State, and 637,270 in the New York Metropolitan region.
- The Bronx remains New York City’s hungriest borough in every category, with more than one in five Bronx residents (23.1 percent) experiencing food insecurity. This includes 30.5 percent of all children, nearly 15 percent of working adults, and more than 20 percent of older residents (ages 60+).
- The number of children living in food insecure households in New York City is decreasing slightly faster than the overall number of food insecure people. While the number of food insecure individuals in New York City decreased by 27 percent from 2013-2015 to 2016-2018, the number of food insecure children (290,996 in 2016-2018) decreased by 28.7 percent. Additionally, the number of food insecure working adults (300,717 in 2016-2018) experienced a larger drop of 37.5 percent in the same time period, likely due to the minimum wage increase.
- In 2016-2018, 9.3 percent of the Metropolitan area’s population suffered from food insecurity, including 12 percent of all children, 6.5 percent of all employed adults, and 6.7 percent of all older residents (ages 60+).
- Hunger Free America calculated how much it would take to end hunger in the city, state, and region, by increasing the food purchasing power of hungry people (through a combination of increased wages and increased government food benefits) in order to equal the food purchasing

power of non-hungry people. The cost of ending hunger in this way would be, per year, approximately \$483 million for New York City, \$883 million for the Metropolitan Region, and \$973 million for all of New York State.

The study, “The Affordability Crisis and Hunger: Soaring Costs of Housing and Other Basics of Living Leave Less for Food,” is available on Hunger Free America’s website: hungerfreeamerica.org/media-research/research

Quotes from elected officials:

"In what is supposedly the wealthiest nation on earth, hunger and food insecurity remain far too prevalent. We see its effects across New York City, especially among the very young and the elderly. Hunger Free America's Annual Hunger Survey provides us with crucial information about the scope of this crisis, pushing us to continue to fight for a better and healthier future for all Americans. As an elected official who has successfully fought for increased funding for New York City's human service providers, especially organizations that address food insecurity, I am grateful for, and share, Hunger Free America's passionate commitment to ending hunger now." —**New York City Council Member Helen Rosenthal (District 6)**

"16 percent of New Yorkers go to bed hungry every night. And nearly 20 percent of Brooklynites face food insecurity, more than any other borough. That means parents are skipping meals so their kids can eat, seniors are scraping pennies together, and children are relying on school food for nutrition. In New York City, and anywhere in the world, these conditions are unacceptable. I’m really proud to join Hunger Free America in their mission to ending this growing crisis of New Yorkers who are working and still living in hunger." — **New York City Council Member Rafael Espinal (District 37)**

“At a time when the Trump Administration is doing everything it can to isolate, intimidate, and invalidate the needs and contributions of immigrants, we need the kind of comprehensive data that Hunger Free America puts out. As a policy maker, I have relied on their reports and will do so again, especially as we defend against Trump’s assaults on public benefits, school lunches, and everything in between.”—**New York City Council Member Carlos Menchaca (District 38)**

"It is unacceptable that so many New Yorkers face hunger this Thanksgiving and the rest of the year. Sadly, the Trump Administration proposes to make hunger even worse, by taking SNAP benefits and school lunches away from our neighbors. More than ever this Thanksgiving, let us all speak up for an America where no one goes hungry." – **New York State Assembly Assistant Speaker Felix W. Ortiz (District 51)**

“Access to nutritious and healthy food is a fundamental necessity and a natural right. As Thanksgiving approaches, we must remember that food insecurity affects one million people in communities across this city. That figure is sobering but there is reason to be hopeful: The number of food-insecure households declined over the past year, which suggests that when we come together to fight hunger in this city, we can have a real effect on the lives of vulnerable New Yorkers. I applaud and thank Hunger Free America for its tireless work to make sure that those in need get the help they deserve.” – **New York City Council Member Francisco Moya (District 21)**

“We stand with Hunger Free America and my other colleagues in government as we continue to fight hunger and food insecurity throughout the City of New York. Let us use the information from this report to create comprehensive ways to eradicate hunger, as we aspire to one day be a hunger free NYC.” – **New York City Council Member Vanessa Gibson (District 16)**

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