



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, Nov. 20, 2018

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## **More than Half of Staten Island Pantries Unable to Meet Rising Demand**

### **Nearly 13 Percent of Staten Island Residents Live Below Federal Poverty Line**

#### **Area Hunger Falls Over Last Six Years but Still Far Higher than 2005-07**

##### **Advocates Decry Acceptance of Mass Deprivation as “New Normal”**

More than 55 percent of respondents to Hunger Free America’s Annual Hunger Survey of food pantries and soup kitchens in Staten Island did not distribute enough food to meet current demand this past year. The pantries and soup kitchens also observed a 67-percent increase in the number of people they served who had lost or had reductions in Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program benefits (previously known as food stamps) in 2018, according to the survey.

The number of people unable to afford an adequate supply of food decreased in New York City, the New York City Metropolitan region, and New York State over the last six years, but remained higher than before the recession, according to a new report by the nonprofit group, Hunger Free America, based on an analysis of federal data. This is the first time in the last 20 years that food insecurity in the state, city, and region have demonstrated sustained, multi-year reductions, likely because of increases in wages and employment.

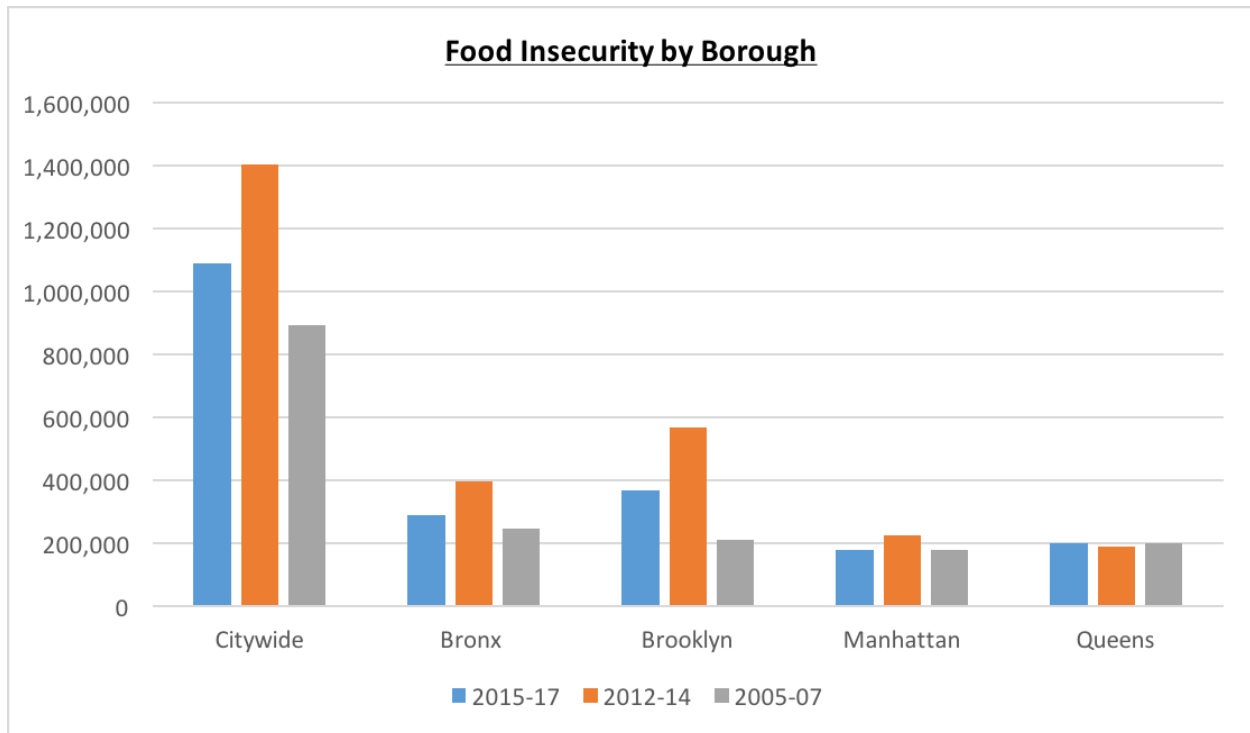
In New York City, the number of people living in food insecure households – households that are unable to afford an adequate supply of food -- decreased by 22 percent during the past six years, declining from 1.4 million people in 2012-2014 to 1.09 million in 2015-2017. However,

the number is still 22 percent higher than the level of 892,000 before the recession in 2005-2007, and one in eight city residents still struggles against hunger.

The sample size of Staten Island residents is too small to report statistically significant food security data, but poverty data tracks closely with food insecurity data. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2017, 12.9 percent of all Staten Island residents lived below the meager federal poverty line -- \$19,337 in annual income for a family of three in 2017.

“While we are certainly pleased that job creation and wage growth over the last six years contributed to a significant decrease in hunger in and around New York, it is scandalous that the number of hungry residents is still far higher than before the recession,” said Joel Berg, CEO of Hunger Free America. “We simply must not accept mass deprivation as any sort of ‘new normal.’”

Hunger Free America announced the Staten Island-specific data analysis on Tuesday at Project Hospitality, a leading organization that provides services to the hungry and homeless as well as clinical, treatment, and support resources. The Emergency Food Programs in Staten Island that were surveyed by Hunger Free America reported a nearly 89-percent increase in the overall number of people served during the past year. They also reported an 89-percent surge in families with children as well as a 78-percent increase in immigrant families accessing their services.



New York City Council Member Debi Rose, who represents New York’s 49<sup>th</sup> District in Staten Island commented: “At a time of year when most Americans are looking forward to holiday celebrations, we must not forget those who are going hungry, especially in our own city. To

combat hunger, I call on my colleagues in all levels of government to join me in supporting livable wages and other policies that will help Americans feed their families. I also stand firmly against any cuts to the social safety net that protects thousands of Americans every day from going hungry. In the spirit of Thanksgiving, if you are able to give to your local food bank, I encourage you to do so, as so many food banks provide immediate relief to families across the five boroughs. And if you need help, please don't feel concerned or ashamed to visit your local food bank, as they are eager to help all New Yorkers."

The study, "The Uneaten Big Apple: Hunger's High Cost in NYC," is available on Hunger Free America's website: [hungerfreeamerica.org/media-research/research](http://hungerfreeamerica.org/media-research/research)

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