



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:

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

Nearly 12 Percent of Staten Island Residents Live Below Poverty Line

More than Half of Staten Island Emergency Food Programs Report Increase in Number of People Served in 2019

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

More than 27 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.

Hunger Free America's analysis of federal data 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.

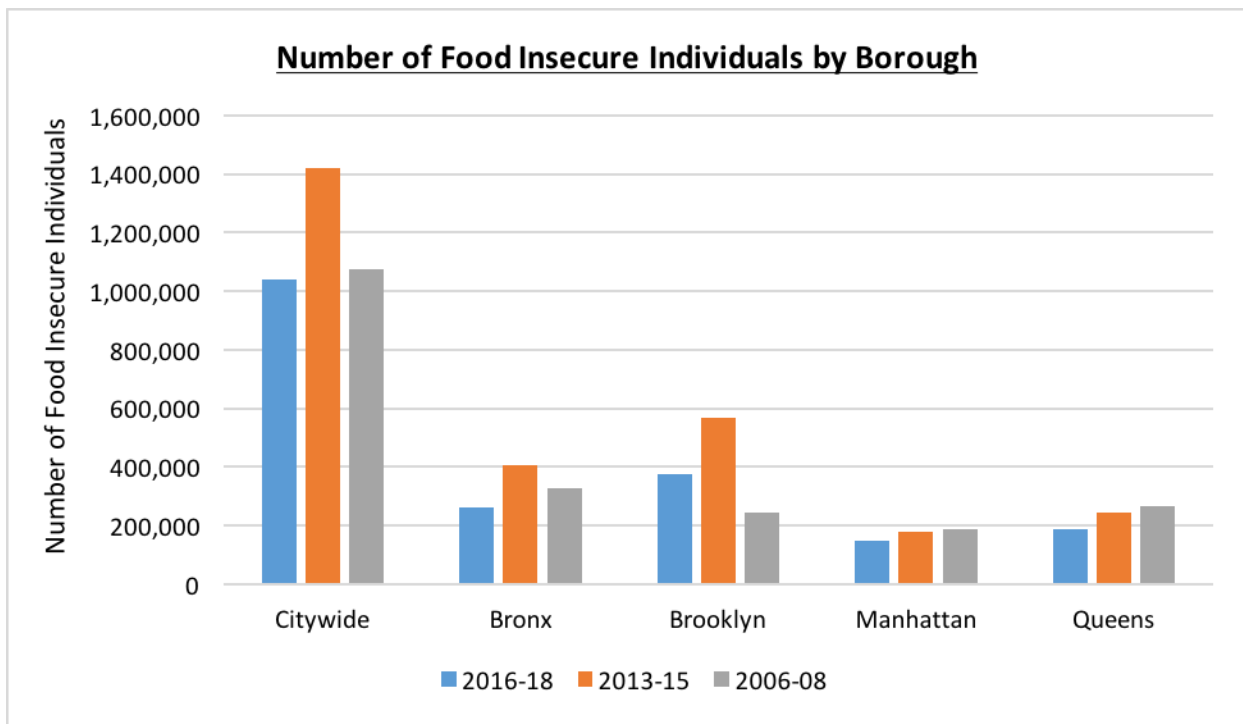
Because of the small sample size in Staten Island, we are not able to report statistically significant food security data for the borough. However, poverty data tracks closely with food insecurity data. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2018, 11.9 percent of all Staten Island residents lived below the meager federal poverty line — \$20,780 in annual income for a family of three.

“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. “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. Staten Island has long been a bedrock middle class borough. When places like Staten Island have a significant hunger and poverty problem, that speaks volumes about the extent of this crisis citywide and nationwide.”

More than 54 percent of emergency food programs in Staten Island that were surveyed by Hunger Free America reported an increase in families with children that utilized their services. And more than 45 percent of soup kitchens and food pantries in the borough reported an increase in the number of immigrants served as well as the number of people who had Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit reductions.

Berg added: “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.”



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