



Testimony of

Louise Feld  
Senior Policy Associate for Food and Economic Security  
Citizens' Committee for Children

Before the  
New York City Council  
General Welfare Committee

Vote on Resolution No. 543-A  
*Resolution calling on the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate to pass  
and the President to sign a Farm Bill that preserves funding for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance  
Program*

June 25, 2013

My name is Louise Feld and I am the Senior Policy Associate for Food and Economic Security at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is a 69-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. I would like to extend a special note of thanks to City Council General Welfare Chair Annabel Palma and the members of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony about Resolution No. 543-A, and also thank the co-sponsors of the Resolution: Speaker Quinn and Council Members Recchia, Greenfield, Brewer, Fidler, Gentile, James, Koppell, Koslowitz, Lander, Mealy, Palma, Rodriguez, Rose, Williams and Reyna.

CCC strongly supports the Council's Resolution, which calls upon the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, a Farm Bill that preserves funding for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program ("SNAP" or "Food Stamps"). The Farm Bill is the single largest source of support for several of the critical nutrition assistance programs that comprise our nation's food safety net. Included among these programs is SNAP, the country's largest nutrition assistance program.

The Council's Resolution comes at an important time, as much uncertainty continues to surround SNAP's fate in the Farm Bill. Thankfully, last week the U.S. House of Representatives rejected a version of the Farm Bill that included over \$20 billion in cuts to SNAP funding, as well as amendments that would have added punitive work requirements for SNAP eligibility and drug testing of SNAP applicants. However, as the House continues to work on the Bill, discussion of potential proposals to further reduce SNAP funding and restrict SNAP eligibility also continues. Further, the U.S. Senate has already passed its version of the Farm Bill, which would cut \$4.1 billion in SNAP funding over the next ten years. This cut would result from limitations imposed on the States' abilities to coordinate the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program ("LIHEAP" or "Heat and Eat") and SNAP – a practice that New York State implements.

These cuts to and restrictions on SNAP are being proposed during a period in which an overwhelming number of New Yorkers are living in poverty and/or are unable to consistently access food, and therefore are reliant on the program to help feed their families. According to the most recent U.S. Census data, New York City's overall poverty rate is 20.9 percent, which means that one in every five New Yorkers lives in poverty.<sup>1</sup> Even more sobering, the child poverty rate in New York City is 30 percent, with 522,000 children living in poverty.<sup>2</sup> Further, 31.4 percent of New York City's families with children participate in SNAP – representing an almost 60 percent increase between 2007 and 2011.<sup>3</sup>

To further demonstrate SNAP's impact in specific New York City neighborhoods, we have attached to our testimony a map that details how many New Yorkers in each New York City Community District receive SNAP. As this map shows, in some neighborhoods more than 80 percent of households depend on SNAP.<sup>4</sup> In all, well over 1.8 million New York City residents

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> Keeping Track Online (2013); <http://data.cccnewyork.org/>.

currently receive SNAP. Therefore ensuring the passage of a Farm Bill that protects this program is critical to New York City and the food security of its residents.

Many New York City children and families who struggle with poverty have great difficulties accessing sufficient amounts of nutritious food. The consequences of such a lack of access are devastating to children's health and well-being. One such immediate result is evident in New York City's childhood obesity rates, as recent New York City data show that 20.7 percent of New York City public school children in kindergarten through eighth grades are obese.<sup>5</sup> Further, as Resolution No. 543-A acknowledges, limited access to healthy food has been shown to negatively affect children's physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development, and ultimately impact children's attendance and academic achievement.

In sum, New York City families are facing ever-growing challenges in their attempts to feed their children the nutritious and affordable meals necessary for healthy growth and development. Families are struggling, especially in the wake of the economic crisis and Hurricane Sandy. Cuts to SNAP – a program proven to feed families and prevent them from falling deeper into poverty – are simply unconscionable. Moreover, SNAP's role as an economic engine that brings federal dollars into our local supermarkets, bodegas, and farmers' markets cannot be ignored.

CCC is grateful for the Council's diligent work to increase all New Yorkers' access to healthy, affordable foods. We thank the Council for including in its Resolution an acknowledgment of the vital role that SNAP plays in the lives of New York City's families and their children. We support the proposed Resolution, as it is a continuation of the Council's efforts to achieve this necessary goal.

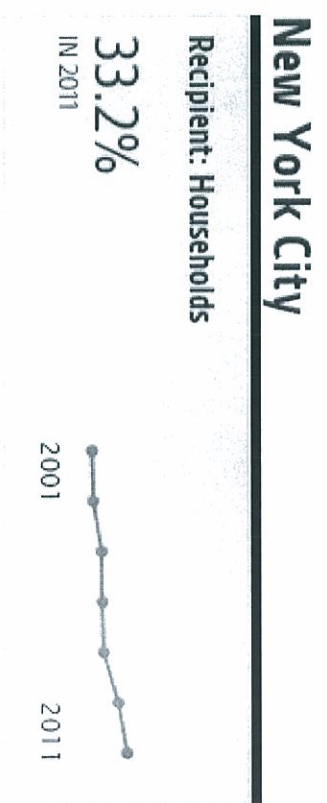
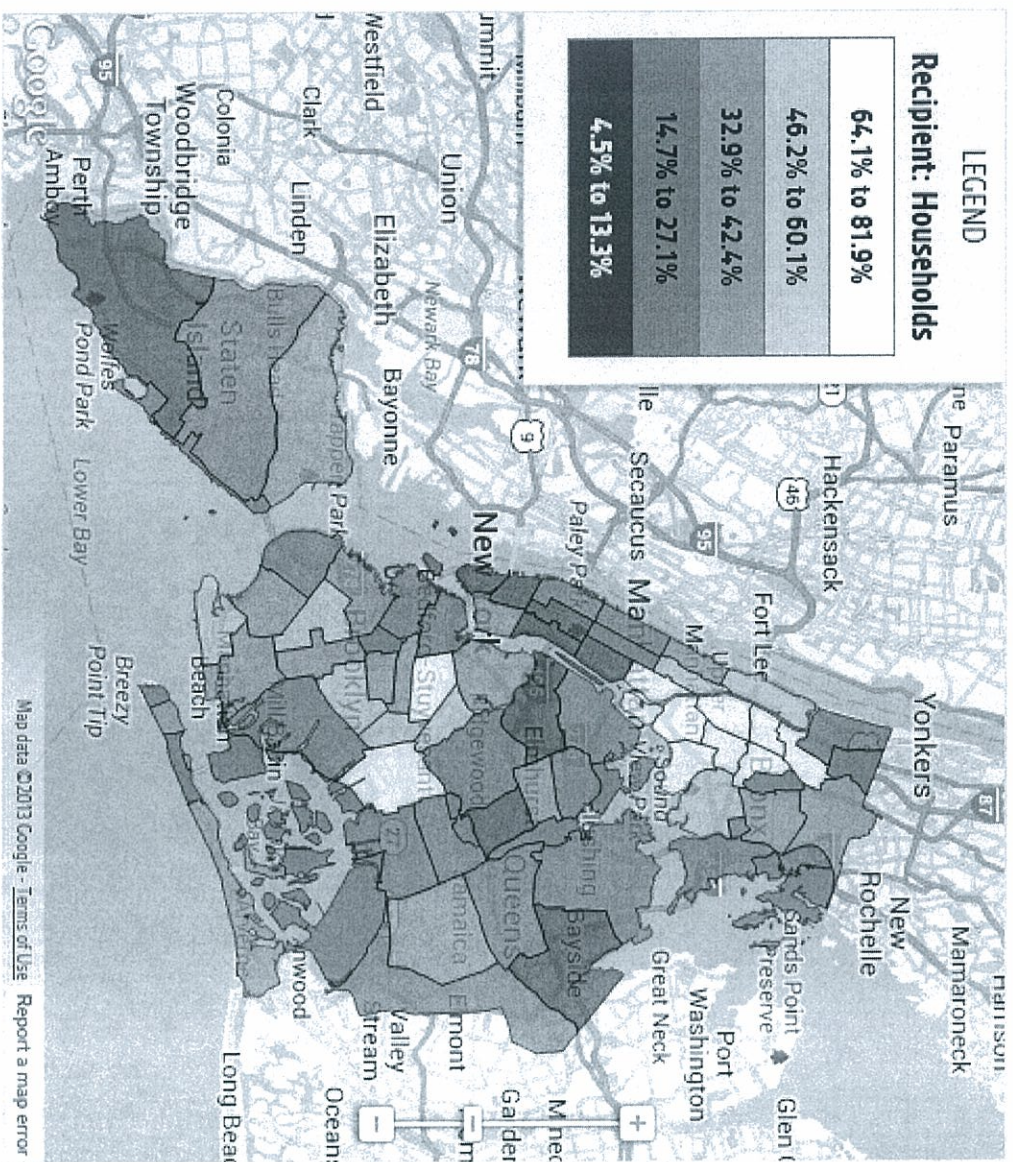
Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

---

<sup>5</sup> Anemona Hartocollis, "Obesity Rate Falls for New York Schoolchildren." *New York Times*. Dec. 15, 2011, accessed June 24, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/schoolbook/2011/12/15/obesity-in-new-york-children-on-the-decline-officials-say/>.

# Percent of Households Receiving SNAP

by Community District, 2011



Recipient Percent, 2011	Change since 2009
Individuals	3.1%
Households	4.8%

**Source:** New York City Human Resources Administration, *District Resource Statement Fiscal and Service Reports* (Fiscal Years 2002 and 2003, Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006, Fiscal Years 2006 and 2007, Fiscal Years 2007 and 2008, Fiscal Years 2009 and 2010, Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012); retrieved from <http://www.nyc.gov/hra/html/statistics/statistics.shtml>.