



AGRICULTURE NEWS

New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets
10B Airline Drive • Albany, New York 12235 • www.agmkt.state.ny.us

CONTACT:
Jessica Chittenden
518-457-3136

FOR RELEASE:
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March 3, 2008

COUNCIL ON FOOD POLICY TO HOLD LISTENING SESSIONS **Listening Sessions Scheduled for April 3, 2008 in NYC**

The New York State Council on Food Policy is holding two listening sessions in New York City to gain perspective from community members on several food policy issue areas and to seek opportunities to maximize collaboration among stakeholders.

Both listening sessions are scheduled for Thursday, April 3, 2008 at the Federal Office Building on 90 Church Street in Lower Manhattan in Conference Rooms A & B on the 4th floor. Session 1 will be held from 10:00 am to 12 noon; Session 2 will be held from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

The listening session is open to the public and will be an open microphone format. Anyone who wishes to participate will have three minutes to present their opinions and must also provide their comments in written format.

Comments should focus on how to strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers; how to maximize participation in food and nutrition assistance programs; and how to increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating and improve access to safe and nutritious foods.

Due to limited time and space, presenters will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis. The Council also requests that only one member per organization and only those who have not yet addressed the Council provide comments. Those who cannot attend the listening session can submit written comments at any time.

Those wishing to participate must RSVP by March 28, 2008 to Mary Ann Stockman at 518-485-7728 or maryann.stockman@agmkt.state.ny.us and indicate which session you wish to attend. A picture ID will be required by all presenters in order to be admitted into the building.

The Council on Food Policy is hosting a series of listening sessions throughout the State. The first two sessions were held in Albany and Syracuse in February. Subsequent

sessions will take place in Binghamton, Rochester and Long Island. Dates and locations of those listening sessions will be posted as they are scheduled at www.agmkt.state.ny.us/eventcal.html.

Governor Spitzer created the Council on Food Policy last year to coordinate state agriculture policy and look at ways to increase sales of New York agricultural products to New York customers. The Council will also make recommendations on developing food policy that will ensure the safe, fresh, nutritious and affordable food for all New Yorkers, especially low income residents, senior citizens and children.

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Jessica A. Chittenden
Director of Communications
NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets
10B Airline Dr., Albany, NY 12235
518-457-3136

**NYS COUNCIL ON FOOD POLICY LISTENING SESSION
 APRIL 3, 2008
 FEDERAL OFFICE BLDG.
 90 CHURCH ST., MANHATTAN**

2:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

Presenter	Organization
1. Ed Yowell	Slow Food NYC
2. Molly Norton	Just Food
3. Anna Lappé	Small Planet Institute *TBS
4. Bilen Berhanu	GreenThumb NYC
5. Kelley Wind	NY Coalition for Healthy School Food
6. Erika Lesser	Slow Food USA
7. Syane Roy	Senator José M. Serano
8. Melissa Pflugh	Healthy Schools Healthy Families
9. Pat Purcell	UFCW – Local 1500
10. Fern Gale Estrow	FGE Food Nutrition Team
11. Marisa Miller Wolfson	Global Green Foundation
12. Danielle Marchione	Citizens' Committee for Children
13. Judith Weinraub	W.K. Kellogg Food & Society Policy Fellow **
14. Stacey Lea Flanagan	Public Health Solutions **
15. Kathy Dischner	Central New York Dietetic Association **

*** TBS – To Be Submitted**

**** Not in attendance; comments submitted by mail**



Slow Food®

New York City

REMARKS
to the
COUNCIL on FOOD POLICY
at the
NYC LISTENING SESSION

Thursday, April 3, 2008

Slow Food NYC is the local, membership-based chapter of a national, not-for-profit association dedicated to the mission of achieving and maintaining a Good, Clean, and Fair food system. By good, we mean REAL food that is seasonal, fresh, healthful, and delicious. By clean, we mean food that is produced sustainably and humanely. By fair, we mean that food producers must be compensated fairly for production and that each of us has a right to food that is good and clean.

Each chapter strives to support the national Slow Food mission in ways that make sense locally. In the country, we support local farmers finding markets for their food. In New York City, achieving a fair food system, where each of us has access to good, clean food is our paramount challenge. While some NYC neighborhoods enjoy a bounty of good, clean food, others suffer epidemics of poor food related diseases..diabetes and obesity.

At a small independent school in East Harlem, where the rate of adult diabetes is 12% and the rate of obesity is 21%, we support Harvest Time and Youth Farmstand programs, where kids learn about food that is healthful, delicious, and fun and where they run a farmstand offering fresh, local produce to parents, school staff, and neighbors. We hope to support the expansion of these programs to a school in Williamsburg, where the rate of diabetes is 11.5% and the rate of obesity is 67%.

Slow Food New York City
c/o Edwin A. Yowell
139 East 18th Street
New York, NY 10003

Slow Food NYC is proud to help in the campaign to provide every New Yorker with access to good, clean food. We can do no less. But, we are an organization of volunteers with limited resources and what we can do ourselves is limited. All of us who care about the food system that serves New York City must strive to change the way our City feeds itself. We, the nearly 1,000 members of Slow Food NYC, support:

Increasing Good Food Access by

- establishing more, permanent farmers markets offering more local food to more of our neighbors;**
- extending federal and state food programs, the Food Stamp program to more eligible individuals and the Farmers Market Nutrition Program to more eligible individuals during a longer season; and**
- creating incentives to use and simplifying the use of Food Stamp benefits in farmers markets; and**

Increasing Good Food Knowledge by

- serving more fresh, healthful, and local, food to our children in our schools;**
- educating children's taste, teaching them that good food is accessible and that it tastes good, and**
- posting calorie information prominently in chain restaurants.**

We commend the Council on Food Policy for offering this opportunity to the members of the New York City community to speak out for a good, clean, and fair local food system.

Thank you.

**Ed Yowell
Leader, Slow Food NYC**

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Slow Food New York City
c/o Edwin A. Yowell
139 East 18th Street
New York, NY 10003

April 3, 2008

Statement to New York Council on Food Policy
Molly Norton
Food Justice Coordinator



Farm & Food Justice for .

I am the Food Justice Coordinator at Just Food, a nonprofit organization that makes fresh, locally grown food available and accessible to more New Yorkers through education, training, and by connecting urban consumers, family farmers, and community gardeners.

NEW YORKERS WANT FARM-FRESH FOOD

One of the primary ways Just Food links New York consumers to New York farm products is through our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in NYC program, which connects communities directly with regional farmers. In exchange for payment at the beginning of the season, CSA members get a weekly delivery of fresh, locally-grown produce. To say that the CSA movement is taking off is putting it mildly, and the statistics more than support this:

- There will be 60 CSAs in New York City this year. That number is up from 50 in 2007 and 41 in 2006.
- All told, more than 12,000 New Yorkers, from the South Bronx to the Upper West Side to East New York will participate in CSAs this year - getting weekly deliveries of farm-fresh produce from small, regional farms.
- Many CSAs are already sold out for the upcoming season and at least 20 of these already have waitlists - up to 150 people long. This translates to approx. 600 people per CSA who want to get their vegetables straight from the farm.
- The majority of CSAs in NYC accept food stamps as payment and work to incorporate low-income community members through subsidized shares, sliding scale payments and revolving loan funds.
- This is not a phenomena unique to NYC. There are 120 other NY CSAs outside of NYC. New York State has more CSAs than any state in the country.

Despite this significant and growing demand, New York is rapidly losing farmland and not putting enough resources into growing new farmers.

NEW YORK NEEDS MORE FARMERS, MORE FARMS

The single greatest obstacle to meeting the demand for CSAs in New York City is supply. We need more local farmers and we need more organic, local, family farms. At our annual CSA conference last week, our current CSA farmers (22 vegetable farmers and 30 additional product farmers) expressed that one of the most important actions that the Council could take would be to encourage and support programs that train people to farm and support immigrant farmers. The fact that three of our best, most knowledgeable and committed NYC urban farmers are leaving us this season to go to UC Santa Cruz's Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems farm training center is a testament to this need.

The local food and farming movement has never had so much momentum. Publications ranging from the Daily News to Time Magazine are writing about this increased demand for local food, and we should be working now to create opportunities for new farmers to get into

CSA. With one million new people expected to come into NYC in the next 20 years, demand will only increase.

In addition to supporting programs that cultivate new farmers, we need to ensure their access to land. According to the American Farmland Trust, New York State loses about 10 times more farmland to development than it protects annually. We can work against this trend by providing more money for the purchase of development rights (for the first time a development right purchase has been set up so that the bidder MUST have a farm plan as part of their bid), by ensuring CSA farmers can secure low-interest loans (some CSA farmers cannot qualify for these loans because the risk is considered to be bared by all the members, not just the one farmer), and by conserving farmland.

Finally, our farmers have expressed a need for improvements in infrastructure. This means better access to meat processing facilities and accepting state-certified slaughterhouses for the resale of meat that can accommodate small-scale producers. It also means altering the food stamp rules to allow CSA farmers to accept food stamps directly from low-income customers.

URBAN GROWERS CONTRIBUTE FOR IMPROVES FOOD SECURITY AND ACCESS

On the urban side, Just Food works with City Farms and has helped to start 8 City Farms Markets – farmers markets run by community gardeners in underserved NYC neighborhoods. Our programs work to increase the amount of fresh food grown on NYC's 600+ community gardens. Our Market Training Program offers technical assistance to gardeners who want to start independently-run, community-based farmers markets and sell their produce to their neighbors. These markets exist in neighborhoods that some doubted a market could be successful, and they provide opportunities for regional farmers to sell their produce.

Many of these markets are strongly supported by the WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs. All of our markets make 40%-80% of their income from FMNP checks. State support for these programs is vital for the success of markets and increasing access to fresh food that is not otherwise available in many low-income neighborhoods. The FMNP program is a strong promotional tool for getting people out to markets. We need to ensure that more people have access to WIC and Senior FMNP funds.

In addition, we need to support EBT/food stamp benefits at our farmers markets – specifically through outreach and promotion. Currently, many of our farmers markets accept food stamps through a promotional wireless EBT program (a partnership with the NYS Department of Ag and Markets and the Farmers Market Federation of NY). However, many customers do not realize they can use their food stamp benefits to buy fresh, local vegetables and fruits.

When people go to food stamp offices, they must also receive information about local farmers markets where they can use their food stamps, as is the case in FMNP offices. Anyone who has signed up for food stamps can attest that they often spend hours sitting in a food stamp office. Every food stamp office needs signs on the walls and pamphlets and maps directing every food stamp recipient to markets and fresh food. This is an easy and incredibly effective way of increasing sales at markets and improving the health of our urban communities.

Naturally, a thriving system of Community Gardens and Urban Farms is fundamental to the existence of these markets. While many efforts are being made on the city level to increase support of urban farming projects, these projects have not been embraced for their

contributions to solving our city's human and environmental health problems. State initiatives to fund urban agriculture and to develop or replicate successful models of urban agriculture could help set an example for city government while helping more projects get off the ground. The position of Manager for Urban Food Systems created last year at Ag and Markets last year was a good step in this direction. And this summer a statewide conference will bring community gardening and urban agriculture leaders together and develop a vision for community gardens and urban agriculture in New York. I urge the council to recommend and support policies that support the outcomes of this meeting as it will be a vision created by the states most active, knowledgeable and passionate gardeners and farmers.

In May, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development will be meeting in NYC to talk about sustainable agriculture. Delegates from all over the world will be touring our City Farms, our upstate farms and our farmers markets. It is exciting that our urban and rural farms are getting international attention. I hope that New York can create innovative and effective policy that recognizes the importance of the many programs and projects supporting New York's urban and rural farms while improving the health of our residents. The international community is looking to New York as a leader and model for these efforts.

Thank you.



City of New York
Parks & Recreation

Adrian Benepe
Commissioner

The Arsenal
Central Park
New York, New York 10021

GreenThumb

49 Chambers Street, Room 1020
New York, New York 10007

Edie Stone
Director

(212) 788-8070

April 3, 2008

Comments for the Council on Food Policy Listening Session

Good afternoon to the members of the New York State Council on Food Policy. My name is Bilen Berhanu and I am an Outreach Coordinator at GreenThumb. I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak about the work of GreenThumb and its greening partners, towards the goal of strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers as a means of creating a more just and sustainable food system.

GreenThumb is a division of the city's Parks and Recreation Department with 610 gardens registered in our program. We serve a community of over 8000 gardeners throughout the five boroughs. We provide material and technical support through a community education program that publishes and distributed a quarterly guide. The 2007 guides publicized 49 public workshops with 1,828 people in attendance. These workshops were facilitated through 29 collaborations with our network of partner organizations. In addition to these workshops, GreenThumb hosts three annual events, such as the GreenThumb GrowTogether, which is a perennial favorite with almost 1800 participants at this year's conference.

There is a growing awareness of the need for access to fresh, locally grown food in the city. Currently, there are efforts in full sway to develop urban agriculture programming. Added Value and East New York Farms in Brooklyn, Taqwa Community Farm and La Familia Verde in the Bronx are prime examples of the potential of urban agriculture to address this question of access.



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GreenThumb is joining these efforts by expanding programming and allocating funds for creating new markets at 16 additional garden sites in 2008. Funding is also in place for 20 healthy cooking and nutrition demonstrations.

GreenThumb is working to maximize the urban agriculture potential by developing 4 new properties rolled over from the Department of Housing Preservation & Development's inventory as market garden sites. GreenThumb needs support from state in terms of legislature and funding streams that will support expansion of such programming. This will also allow for us to continue our collaborative relationships with groups like Just Food and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

We are also eager to hear from this Council on how we can be better partners of participants in projects that will further the goals set forth at this listening session. For example, GreenThumb has the potential to serve as a property manager by adding land that is programmed for urban agriculture into our inventory.

I look forward to listening and working alongside you all. Thank you!

Bilen Berhanu

Outreach Coordinator

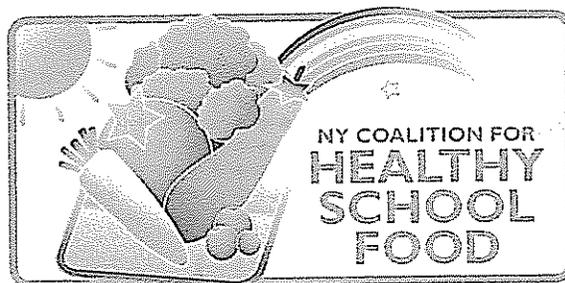
GreenThumb | City of New York Parks & Recreation

P. 212.442.8961

F. 212.788.8052

E. Bilen.Berhanu@parks.nyc.gov

www.greenthumbnyc.org



POB 737, Mamaroneck, NY 10543

(914) 630-0199 * info@healthyschoolfood.org * www.healthyschoolfood.org

Food Policy Session

April 3, 2008

My name is Kelley Wind and I am the Program Director for NYCHSF. Our organization is a statewide nonprofit that works to improve the health and well-being of New York's students by advocating for healthy plant-based foods, including local and organic where possible, farm to school programs, the elimination of unhealthy competitive foods in all areas of the school (not just the cafeteria), comprehensive nutrition policy, and education to create food- and health-literate students.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on food policy at this listening session.

The health crisis affecting our children is so bad, that:

- 50% of children between the ages of 2 - 15 have fatty streaks in their arteries, literally the beginning stages of heart disease.
- 40 - 53% of African American and Latino children in the US, and 33% of all US children born in the year 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes at some point in their lives. This means more amputations, blindness, kidney dialysis, heart disease, poor quality of life and early death. For example, we are talking about 53% of all African American males! It is too hard to fathom.
- 30% of NY children and 66% of US adults are overweight or obese, and less than 2% of children eat according to the US Dietary Guidelines.

As Governor Paterson has recognized: "Childhood obesity has become an epidemic in New York -- leading to poor health and poor educational performance."

- ① The best way that we can increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating is to stop allowing the food industry to influence recommendations regarding nutrition. We have to be wary when profit is their motive. For example, with 1/3 of heart attack deaths occurring with cholesterol levels between 150 and 200, why are we recommending that people keep their levels below 200 instead of 150? With research studies published in major medical journals about heart disease and type 2 diabetes reversal using low-fat vegetarian diets, why aren't we talking about vegetarian diets more? Many people just don't get what eating less cholesterol and saturated fat, and more fiber, means.

We believe the easiest way to promote healthy eating is to recommend that people eat more whole plant foods, and less processed and animal foods. It's simple, and it's very direct.

With this in mind, it is imperative that we support our schools in an effort to help, rather than hurt our children. Now my comments are about school lunches in general, and should not be construed to be mean those in NYC, who is doing better than many other schools across the state and country. But when a typical school lunch is a cheeseburger on a white bun, canned peas, canned fruit cocktail and whole milk - one has to ask, what are our priorities? The entrees are the worst. Other common entrees deep fried at the manufacturers yet promoted as baked (at the school) are chicken nuggets and mozzarella sticks. Pepperoni pizza, grilled cheese, and macaroni and cheese are other common entrees. These cheese entrees are the worst: high in total fat, high in saturated fat, and high in sodium. In some, the sodium is half the amount an ADULT should have in an entire day – in just one entrée, never mind the whole meal.

The reality is that School Food Service Directors are asked to do the impossible: create a healthful five component meal for only 90 cents food cost (not including labor or overhead). And due to the huge increases in health insurance, food and transportation costs recently, the 90 cents is worth less and less each passing day. . .

/ Out of the 90 cents, 20 cents is in the form of commodities provided free from the federal government to the schools, complements of our federal tax dollars. The top four commodity foods in NYS are beef, chicken, cheese and white potato products. Most schools rely on these commodities for the entrée. Yet we ask these hard working food service directors and staff to make healthier meals. The question is, can any of us make a healthy five component meal with 70 cents cash and 20 cents worth of beef, chicken, cheese, and white potato products? Can you???

The proposed NYS budget originally included an increase of 7 cents per meal that was to be effective in October 2009. The increase in the cost of health care, food, and transportation has far outpaced inflation, and 7 cents today would not even mean that the school meals could be equivalent to what they were a year ago, never mind what they will be in a year and a half. Yet even this funding, which was not nearly enough, was removed from the budget, and now there is no known increase. We urge the Council to advocate to not just reinstate originally proposed funding for school meals, but to increase it dramatically. We can say that we don't have the money, but then we are never going to fix the health crisis and the state is going to continue spending a lot of money on cleaning up the mess as a result. At some point, we've got to become proactive.

We need to focus on feeding children fresh fruits and vegetables, and offering plant based entrees as a healthy option. Plant based entrees are cholesterol free, low in saturated fat, and full of fiber – exactly the direction the US Dietary Guidelines advise us to move in. And there is an issue that many people might not yet be aware of regarding red meat. A huge meta analysis of 7000 studies on diet and cancer has declared that processed meats are so dangerous, that no amount can be considered safe, and that the amount that can increase colorectal cancer, in adults, by 30 – 50% is only 2 ounces per week: that's just one hotdog! That's just a couple of strips of

bacon! That's just one bologna sandwich with a few slices of bologna! That is less than one serving per week! And that is for adults and we know that children are much more susceptible to carcinogens. Similarly, red meat such as beef, pork (despite its name as the other white meat), and lamb causes a similar increase in cancer risk for just one serving a day for adult men, and less than one serving a day for adult women.

As a result of this compelling research, it is our opinion that New York State should eliminate red and processed meats from schools – because we know that children are eating plenty of hot dogs, bacon, pepperoni, and hamburgers outside of school – that schools don't need to be adding to their red meat burden, particularly at tax payers expense! Additional reasons for eliminating red meat from schools is that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organizations 2006 report Livestock's Long Shadow proves that livestock contribute more to global warming than all transportation combined. Finally, the cruelty inherent in factory farming, where at the very least 95% of meat consumed in this country comes from, is completely inconsistent with food safety and the kind of character education and humane education that are required teaching in schools.

And unless we eliminate competitive foods, children are going to choose ice cream, cookies, chips, sodas, sports drinks, and other unhealthy foods at school, because they can. And these competitive foods that are sold are also an equity issue – because some students can afford them and others can not – setting up clearly visible differences between children. Yet school cafeterias need to sell these items to make ends meet, and other clubs and groups in the school sell junk food from vending machines, bake sales, and in school stores to raise much needed funds. But all of this is at the expense of our children's health. So as long as schools need to raise money, or sell junk foods to balance the cafeteria budget, we will continue to have the problems we do.

The only way to help schools set the good example that they should, to help children establish healthy eating patterns and preferences early on, is to fairly fund the school meal program. Additional funds means more fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and plant-based entrees - the foods that support good health and prevent disease. Additional funds means hiring additional food service staff, paying them fairly, and providing training, so they can prepare real meals, rather than opening cans and re-heating pre-packaged frozen entrees. And additional funds means schools won't need to make ends meet at the expense of our children. Children get enough cookies, chips, soda, and ice-cream outside of school. Healthy nutrition leads to better health – both physical and mental, better grades, and better behavior.

Schools have a unique opportunity to educate children every day about healthy food. Schools should practice what they teach. If we can't provide a consistent message about health in schools, then what are we teaching our children? And what diseases are we helping to set them up for? We need New York State to provide strong leadership on the issue of healthy nutrition, because until this issue is effectively addressed, our health crisis and the costs associated with it will continue to increase. Thank you.

The New York State Council on Food Policy
Listening Session, April 3, 2008

Statement on behalf of Slow Food USA
by Erika Lesser

My name is Erika Lesser. I am the Executive Director of Slow Food USA, a national nonprofit organization with 15,000 members and 180 chapters nationwide. Our headquarters are in Brooklyn, and we have over a thousand members in the New York City area alone. Slow Food is also an international organization, with more than 83,000 members worldwide and 1,000 chapters. Nonetheless, we are still a relatively small, young organization striving to make a bigger impact.

Slow Food believes that food is a common language and a universal right. Our vision is of a world in which all people can eat delicious food that is good for them, good for the people who grow it and good for the planet. Our mission is to create dramatic and lasting change in the food system. We reconnect Americans with the people, traditions, plants, animals, fertile soils and waters that produce our food. We inspire a transformation in food policy, production practices and market forces so that they ensure equity, sustainability and pleasure in the food we eat.

I want to thank The New York State Council on Food Policy for convening these listening sessions, and for your goal to help New York State ensure the availability of safe, fresh, nutritious and affordable food for all New Yorkers.

Of primary importance to Slow Food are the issues of local food and community wellbeing.

America is in its infancy of reaping the harvest of a failed food policy. The present American plague of childhood diabetes and obesity are mere warnings of a looming public health crisis that will increasingly come upon us if we continue within present food policies. What we need is a new food policy, for real food, for good food.

Real food is required for health because only real food contains the nutrients, vitamins, minerals and flavors that our bodies require to remain vibrant, healthy and happy. Today, America measures the value of food primarily in caloric content. High caloric content does provide energy, but it also makes us fat without supplying the nutrients and other food requirements necessary to sustain healthy lives. New York farmers supplying fresh and nutritious food for the people of New York not only decreases our dependence on fossil fuels, it also makes our workers more productive and our students more attentive.

New York Farmers growing food for New York neighbors will produce other benefits for our State. When Abraham Lincoln was in the White House, he was asked what he thought of importing steel to lay the nation's rapidly expanding railroads. He said, "If we import the steel, we get the steel, but we lose our dollars. If we manufacture the steel here, we get the steel, and we get to keep our dollars." New York farmers growing the food that New Yorkers eat also means economic development, job creation, and rural revitalization in New York State. Keeping food dollars already being spent in New York from exiting our great state will not only benefit New York farmers. It will also generate local jobs and business

opportunities in processing, storage, and distribution to efficiently deliver these products from farmers to consumers. Since these dollars will be spent, the only question is whether New Yorkers or outsiders will derive the greatest benefit from them. As we retain our dollars within the borders of our state, New York farmers, families, and businesses will find new arenas of entrepreneurship in which to flourish, thus replenishing the State's treasury.

Slow Food is especially concerned about the effect of our "fast food culture" on youth. Its effects are well documented and the findings regarding obesity, chronic diseases, and life expectancy are sobering. Less documented, but still very real, are the effects of this industrialized system on our youth's knowledge, understanding, and relationships with food and food production. The solution to better health and wellness among our youth relies in part on their ability to make conscious, informed decisions about their food: who grows it, how it is grown, how it is prepared, and with whom it is enjoyed. The other part depends on us, to ensure that our school lunch programs are not based on the cast-offs of industrial agriculture, but on nutritious, healthy, delicious and locally grown food. I urge you to explore ways that we can support New York State farmers and schools in working together to increase the amount of New York grown food in our school lunch programs.

We commend the Council's commitment to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to safe, affordable, nutritious food, and want to recognize that other states are working towards the same goals. For example, the Governor of Washington State just signed The Local Farms — Healthy Kids Bill. The State of Illinois has a Task Force now commissioned by their Governor to present recommendations to next year's Illinois General Assembly for creating a fully functioning farm to fork local agricultural system in that state. We would recommend that you look to these models.

Again, we commend you for this effort. The task before us is great, and Slow Food USA would be honored to contribute in any way we can to the efforts of the New York State Council on Food Policy.

Thank you.



**NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
JOSÉ M. SERRANO
28th Senate District**

Testimony by State Senator Jose M. Serrano given before the New York State Council on Food Policy on April 3, 2008.

Supermarkets are closing in East Harlem. The reasons are varied and hard to define precisely, but it lies somewhere in the nexus between rising rents, higher food prices and increasing energy costs which affect everything from refrigeration to lighting to deliveries. The skyrocketing cost of doing business in East Harlem has recently caused multiple supermarkets to close their doors. A spate of further closures looms just over the horizon.

We are looking at a public health crisis of dangerous proportions. The supermarkets that are able to provide a wide variety of fresh and nutritious food at reasonable prices cannot afford to do business in our community any longer. East Harlem already has some of the highest rates of preventable diet related diseases in the city. I dread the social cost of having the remaining healthy options driven out.

Some of our constituents are determined to eat healthy and are willing to make lengthy trips in order to get nutritious food. However, for many of our elderly and disabled residents that is not an option. In one striking example, a neighborhood resident was carrying her groceries back from the market when she had a heart attack. She used to shop at a nearby Pioneer Supermarket, which closed in February.

We formed a task force to address this crucial issue at a time when the future of the neighborhood is being shaped in important ways. The task force is an attempt to bring together all the relevant stakeholders, from business to non-profits to community residents, and meet with representatives from various government agencies and elected officials to discuss and explore solutions.

Our first meeting brought in Ben Thomases, the Food Policy Coordinator in Mayor Bloomberg's administration. We presented him with East Harlem specific information gathered by our office. The task force looks forward to a continued dialogue with the Mayor's office.

We hosted representatives of a company that owns six Northern Manhattan markets at our second meeting in order to understand the business aspects of owning a supermarket in East Harlem. It was informative

hearing about the costs of operating a supermarket and the barriers that exist to success.

We are currently communicating with The Food Trust from Pennsylvania. This non-profit has successfully fought for improved food access throughout low-income communities in that state. We hope to combine resources and ideas with the group to bring forward solutions that will work in East Harlem and ultimately throughout all of New York.

As I said before, it is difficult for us to pinpoint the exact cause of supermarket closures. Obviously, skyrocketing rents in East Harlem have emerged as the easy answer to the problem. We are looking at possible commercial rent stabilization mechanisms to ensure that food retailers can depend on the steady rents that make a business viable.

However rising rents are not the sole reason for the market closures. The costs of doing business have risen across the board, bringing up the price of food. Yet New York City is still not claiming all the food stamp dollars to which it is entitled. Five hundred million dollars in federal benefits that residents of this city qualified for were not claimed last year. We must close this gap, while encouraging the use of those dollars on healthy purchases. To this end, our office has been looking at ways to make the ability to redeem EBT dollars contingent on grocers stocking healthy offerings.

Another possible course of action would be a program that offers low-cost loans and grants to help small community grocers grow to meet the needs of the community. East Harlem is full of an entrepreneurial spirit that can be harnessed to meet these great challenges. Furthermore, if these businesses hire within the community, we further spur economic development and put more dollars in the pockets of neighborhood shoppers.

Finally there is the question of education. Our friends at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene deserve the highest praise for their campaigns to increase awareness of healthy lifestyle choices in Northern Manhattan.

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. We invite any suggestions the Council on Food Policy might have as to how to continue to move forward efficiently and effectively. We also would like to extend an invitation to the council to send a representative to the next meeting of the supermarket task force. It is our hope we can foster a strong working relationship and move forward to solve this problem together.

Senator José M. Serrano, represents the 28th Senate District, which is comprised of parts of the South Bronx, Highbridge, University Heights, East Harlem, Yorkville, and Roosevelt Island.

April 3, 2008

Written Comments to the Food Policy Council

Healthy Schools/Healthy Families (HSHF) is a school based health program founded in 1999 and led by NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center. HSHF partners with multiple community and government organizations to improve the health of children and their families in public elementary schools in Northern Manhattan. One of the goals of our program is to cultivate a school culture which values physical activity and nutrition and uses environment and policy change to promote healthy habit development. In our experience over our years working with families in Northern Manhattan, most people already know that a garden salad is healthier than a Big Mac and Fries, but not every one knows how these routine, small choices impact their lives or how families can realistically incorporate these changes within their financial situation and cultural norms. We face a daunting task; our neighborhoods are not populated with an abundance of businesses or resources that support healthy lifestyles, we are bombarded with unhealthy products through the media, and many working families face difficult choices in balancing time, economic resources and health living. It is for this reason HSHF utilizes a social marketing campaign around healthy living in its schools, with a monthly, unified health messages using a variety of mediums- written newsletters and health education displays, verbal announcements, and interactive special events. These messages are tailored to the communities we serve. For example, we make sure to give demonstrations utilizing local brands and terminology found in the stores of Harlem, Washington Heights and Inwood. Popular are Tropical Fantasy drinks and "quarter waters", so we give demonstrations for families to visualize their sugar content and impact to their bodies. We also strive to make cultural staples more nutrient dense, like adding kale to a favorite bean dish, or pairing a spinach omelet with mangu. With partners like FoodChange and City Harvest, we are filling an unmet need in our communities in pairing healthy living with tradition. Through these efforts, parents feel confident cooking vegetables unfamiliar to their culture, and students include things like low-fat cheese, raisins and water as familiar and enjoyable snacks.

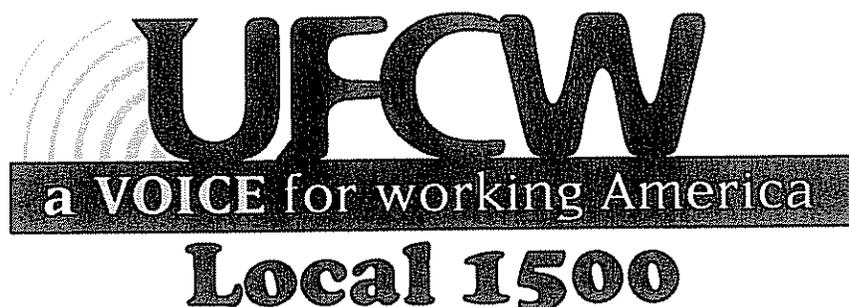
Despite our strides in health promotion and education, one major barrier to achieving behavior change continues to be access to affordable healthy foods. Healthy foods are not always available, and when they are, they are often expensive and of poor quality. The demand for healthy foods in low income communities is there: parents tell us this at parent teacher conferences, they tell us this in focus groups, and students tell us this when they show us the healthy choices they make when schools have healthy snack sales. A bodega on Nagle Avenue, across the street from PS 152 in Washington Heights worked with HSHF in bringing the DOH Bodega initiative of selling packaged carrots and pre-sliced apples to this neighborhood. The pilot was an enthusiastic success, our only problem was keeping up the supply of snack apples that kept selling out. The bodega owner continues show interest in selling healthy snacks such as these, but we are not able to find a vendor willing to transport the foods to the bodega since this trial program ended. We routinely hold Healthy Snack Sales which include the sale of snack-sized portions of low-fat cheese and crackers, raisins, fresh fruit and vegetables, trail mix and seltzer mixed with 100% juice, each for \$1 or less. These sales continuously sell out,

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even when competing with ongoing bake sales. The demand for quality, healthy foods has also been demonstrated by the community. PS 180 Staff and students work the HSHF staff to sell organic, locally grown vegetables and fruit at their own farmer's market called Fresh Food Fresh Start, which is entering it's fourth growing season. This market has been embraced by the community and will expand to two days a week this year.

If there is one question that we hear from our students, whether it be at a school's farmers Market in Morningside Heights, the cramped schoolyard at PS4, or concerned parents and teachers in Washington Heights, it is about this challenge of access. Our neighborhoods need increased funding for community-based health promotion efforts in conjunction with government and policy changes that promote access to affordable, healthy food. HSHF has illustrated that when barriers such as cost, access and unfamiliarity with healthy foods are addressed, underserved communities will embrace healthy foods. Fruit and vegetable carts in low income neighborhoods and incentives for NY State farmers to supply to fresh, locally grown food to bodegas in underserved communities would be two important steps in the right direction. Utilizing pre-existing neighborhood businesses, such as bodegas and employing people from the neighborhood as vegetable cart vendors, may also unify the community around this issue and foster buy-in.

Melissa Pflugh, MS, RD
Program Manager
Healthy Schools, Healthy Families
New York Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Community Pediatrics
212-342-0713
Mep7006@nyp.org



United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 1500

Testimony Before

The New York State Council on Food Policy

Presented by

Director of Special Projects

Patrick J. Purcell Jr.

Thursday April 3rd, 2008

Good afternoon Members of the Council. My name is Patrick Purcell and I am Director of Special Projects for United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 1500, New York State's largest local Union representing grocery store workers. UFCW Local 1500 represents over 22,000 workers employed by Pathmark, Stop and Shop, King Kullen, Gristedes, Key Food D'agastinos and Fairway Supermarkets. Of our 22,000 members, over 10,000 of them reside here in New York City with their families.

I want to thank you for taking the time to hold these hearings on one of the most pressing issues facing New Yorkers today: the lack of access to healthy, affordable food from Supermarkets that provide middle class jobs and improve the overall health of communities.

Our time is short so I will make quick points. The complete report of our research on this problem will be sent to the members of the Council in the near future.

New Yorkers living in low-income neighborhoods lack access to affordable nutritious food. Of the over 11,600 stores in New York City registered with the Department of Agriculture and Markets only 550 are what you and I would consider traditional grocery stores. Approximately 10,000 of them are bodegas and over 800 are drug stores chains like CVS and Walgreens.

Communities throughout NYC and its suburbs know that when they lack equal access to a traditional Supermarket the following is true:

- They pay more for food
- The quality of food is subpar.
- The selection of food is less healthy
- The jobs are not living wage jobs.

Good jobs, good food and good health should be the building blocks of every community yet they are quickly becoming extinct from NYC and other communities at an alarming rate.

As we speak, we are fighting a battle in the Bronx to preserve a Supermarket that does over \$2,000,000 dollars a year in food stamps alone. In this case the

developer is trying to raise the rent to \$50 a square foot. That is an amount no grocery store could afford. If they did agree to lease at that amount, consumers would pay higher prices and workers would get lower wages.

Clearly, the rising cost of rents are pushing grocery stores out so developers can bring yet another Starbucks, Blockbuster or chain drug store to a neighborhood.

Of course other economic issues such as energy cost, transportation, sky rocketing health care cost and other factors are also contributing to this massive decline in the number of traditional grocers.

Another result of the lack of traditional grocers in a community is the overall health of a community. Consider some of the following facts:

- Lack of access to healthy food has been linked to increased rates of obesity, heart disease and diabetes
- According to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, In the last 10 years, the number of New Yorkers who have been diagnosed with diabetes has increased by 250% and the death rate has nearly doubled
- The poorest New Yorkers have rates of diabetes more than three times higher than those making more than \$52,000 a year.
- Diabetes strikes hardest at older people, Blacks and Latinos, and poor people. New Yorkers older than 60 have more than twice the rate of diabetes than those between the ages of 40 and 59. Blacks and Latinos have more than twice the rates than whites and Asians.
- People in East Harlem, who have lost or going to lose over 50% of the grocery stores in their communities die of diabetes at twice the rate of people in the city as a whole and diabetes-related amputations are higher than in any other part of New York

As for jobs, it is well documented that traditional Supermarkets tend to provide more full time jobs, with higher wages, better health benefits and secure pensions. These types of jobs are good for the economy of the communities and for the State as a whole.

I would ask this Council to take a hard look at the factors causing the decline of the traditional grocery store not just in New York City but as I suspect in other urban markets as well.

Supermarkets and the positives that they provide our communities in the forms of economics, health and prosperity can no longer be taken for granted.

As I understand it, the Council was formed to coordinate state agriculture policy and make recommendations on developing food policy that will help ensure the availability of safe, fresh, nutritious and affordable food for all New Yorkers, especially low income residents, senior citizens and children. The Council was asked to look at ways to increase sales of New York agricultural products to New York consumers, with a special emphasis on expanding the consumer market for organic food.

I would suggest the growth of traditional Supermarkets will not only help accomplish those goals, but do so much more in the process.

Let me just take a second to thank our Food Policy Coordinator from our Union Moriah Kinberg for help in preparing today's statements.

Again, thank you for holding these hearings today.

Written Testimony to the NYS Council on
Food Policy
Presented by
Fern Gale Estrow, MS, RD, CDN
of The FGE Food & Nutrition Team

Thursday, April 3, 2007
90 Church Street
Conference Rooms A&B
NYC, NY

I want to welcome you to New York City and thank the members of the NYS Council on Food Policy and affiliated staff from Agriculture and Markets for taking the time to be a part of the process to address change in our food system, and for the time you are devoting to the needs of our state.

I am Fern Gale Estrow, founder of The FGE Food and Nutrition Team, and a registered dietitian. My team works with agencies, organizations, educational institutions and communities focusing on improving health and quality of life through integration of food programs, nutrition education, clinical support, media literacy, and policy development and practice using a food systems approach. Currently my organization works with at risk populations in low-income communities through consulting contracts with community-based organizations and directly with programs such as Head Start, after-school programs, WIC and congregate feeding sites for older adults, while also consulting to national organizations to support access to healthful food through collaboration. I have founded two farmers markets (South Bronx and East Harlem) and am a former food service operator who ran corporate food operations locally and nationally so appreciate marketing, distribution and competition. I would like to acknowledge while I am not speaking on behalf of any of these organizations I am an active member of the Food Systems Network NYC, New York City Nutrition Education Network, American Dietetics Association, and Society for Nutrition Education and the American Public Health Association.

Last we met I encouraged you to:

- Become familiar with the Stages of Change Model.
- Educate one another on your areas of knowledge/experience and the nuances of the words you choose.
- Incorporate an advisory committee to support work of the Council that would include those participating in on the ground programming, and offering a multi-sector perspective.
- Establish a baseline of what we are consuming and based on this set goals and consider how to educate legislators so they identify with the value of the work.
- Explore supermarket access relative to community food security (Philadelphia model – now also being explored by NYC).
- Share information with federal legislators to be sure they are familiar with the work of our state and be familiar with federal proposals that support programs we want to see happen – e.g. the proposed Healthy Food Enterprise Development Program which would support processing and infrastructure and the Community Food Projects

Grant Program, offering value for incubation of collaborative programs that address food security.

- Reach out to professionals with multiple expertise – e.g. Registered Dietitians who are farmers.
- Promote access between the location of WIC Clinics, WIC Farmers Market Programs receiving CACFP (early childhood, Head Start, afterschool programs)
- Support local purchasing by federal, state and city food programs – National School Lunch Program, Summer Food Service Program, WIC, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), congregate feeding, Farmers Market Nutrition Program for Seniors along with other key institutions such as hospitals and prisons.

Today I want to offer attention to other aspects that are key to our work here, recognizing we have an opportunity to provide a model for work within our state, but I would venture to say nationally and internationally.

- I request **immediate** attention be paid by all on the Council and the Council as a whole to the NYC Wholesale Farmers Market, because if you do not it may not be a funded project any longer. The Market is important to the state and is threatened under the current budget process. Conversations with the New York Farm Bureau, farmers and advocates around the state will support its value, contrary to the statements of some legislators who are seeking funds for their own projects. The Wholesale Farmers Market should be considered as part of a long-term economic, sustainable and conservation initiative. While there are some who claim our Western NYS farmers will not utilize such an operation, it should be noted that farmers from across Ontario (a very large area) use the Ontario Food Terminal's Wholesale Farmers Market in Toronto. If you have questions I encourage you to reach out – Karen Karp of Karp Resources and/or karen@karpresources.com and/or Ted Spitzer, of Market Ventures tspitzer@marketventuresinc.com , who have a history with the project, which does come under Agriculture and Markets. Some information is also available on-line at <http://www.wholesalefarmersmarketnyc.com/>
- Facilitate better coordination of state resources around nutrition information– they are very scattered currently and it is not possible to my knowledge to view them on-line. Many states provide this - look at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene as a resource – we should have this at the state level.
- Support nutrition standards for our emergency food system that reflects nutrient density over calories.
- Facilitate Menu Labeling – the public has a right to information. Again, our New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is an excellent resource.

- Through legislation, public and private partnerships support social marketing efforts that encourage healthy eating and food preparation at the home, in the community, the school (including early childhood) the religious institutions.
- Facilitate local urban and rural food production and access through CSA's, urban farms, community gardens, green carts (a program recently approved in New York City), community kitchens, and mobile markets.
- Facilitate processing in NYS for our agriculture products, making us less dependant on external resources and shortening the supply chain. Impacts would be reflected in energy, economics and food access in emergency situations. Processing examples include frozen produce processing, milk plants, mobile processing unit for USDA approved livestock.
- Facilitate access to local product at all levels as the cost fuel and oil based products will have a greater and greater impact on food cost, and purchasing local product support by individuals and institutions (food banks, food pantries, hospitals, prisons), supports our state economy
- Recognize affordable food is also impacted by access to work – by supporting local agriculture we are supporting our local economy through work and local food purchases at the market/local store/supermarket and from the farm. In the case of the latter by using local product we ensure an income for our rural agriculture community – often some of our poorest (this is not only an urban issue).

There are several additional resources that I believe have been highlighted in the past but rather than assume will mention them here.

WHY's Food Security Learning Center <http://www.worldhungeryear.org/fslc/default.asp>

Community Food Security and their Food Policy Council Project with over-site by Mark Winne mark@foodsecurity.org a well-known entity in this work. www.foodsecurity.org
There are regular national phone calls directed to the work such as Food Policy Councils and I recommend our active participation.

The Food Systems Network NYC is also a valuable resource regarding issues of interest in New York City and it is my hope each of you is receiving our newsletter. If not please contact me or visit our website www.foodsystemsny.org.

Thank you for your time.
Fern Gale Estrow, MS, RD, CDN
The FGE Food & Nutrition Team
200 West 18th Street
New York, New York 10011

212/691-5154 (phone)
212/627-7641 (fax)
fge2@earthlink.net

Addendum:

There were many statements made throughout the listening session that were of great value. While I did not hear all testimony there are a few points I would like to reinforce:

- EBT access for farmers is vital to outreach in our low-income communities and all those working with farmers markets (Green Market, Harvest Home, Community Markets) need support. Per the testimony of Greenmarket it appears they have only been partially funded and the other organizations, both profit and non-profit have not been included in the funding support for the terminals. Addressing this would enhance the access issue, along with improved marketing which was noted as being underway.
- Erica Lasser of Slow Food, USA made a statement about the importance of flavor. As a registered dietitian I would support this statement it is important and one of the great values of local varieties is flavor has an opportunity to play a bigger role. When a product is local there shelf life and an shipping/packing factors are less important, so flavor, as well as texture, can weigh in with less competition, offering more options.
- The story of the bodega owner who was unable to purchase the carrots and apples from a vendor following the NYC Department of Health initiative is an excellent example of distribution issues. Is there a way for bodega owners near schools to obtain these products in collaboration with SchoolFood? With DoD Fresh we used the Department of Defense distribution system, and while there is certainly a difference as the bodegas are for profit, it seems there ought to be a way to get these products into communities if we are offering them in our schools.
- The Issue of food safety of "dollar stores" was brought up and I would support this as a concern. Monitoring of food product in these stores needs to be taken into consideration.

Comments for Food Policy Taskforce

April 3, 2008

Submitted by:

Marisa Miller Wolfson

Outreach Coordinator

Global Green Foundation

marisamiller@verizon.net

917.306.4827

We are a grassroots non-profit organization dedicated to educating people about healthy, eco-friendly, humane living. We go into high schools, colleges, law schools, community centers and churches and talk to just about anybody who will listen to us.

We focus mostly on food. Eating is something we do three times a day, every day, and it has a tremendous impact on the planet.

Unfortunately, PlaNYC, which aims to reduce New York City's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 30% by 2030, does not include anything about food or agriculture.

Food and agriculture are key factors in climate change, and without addressing their impacts, established goals for reducing the City's GHG emissions are unlikely to be met.

Most people know that buying local, organic food has obvious benefits in the fight against climate change. But since other groups, I imagine, will be covering those aspects today, I'm going to bring up an aspect that is less well-known but just as important, and that is eating more plant foods and fewer animal foods.

You probably have not heard about the United Nations Food & Agriculture Organization report entitled "Livestock's Long Shadow." The report identified the livestock sector as one of the top contributors to the world's most serious environmental problems at every scale from local to global.

In terms of climate change, the livestock sector has a bigger impact even than the entire transportation sector, according to the report.

The chair of the most important international organization dealing with global warming (the IPCC) recently came out and said, "Please eat less meat -- meat is a very carbon-intensive commodity."

Apart from being a huge contributor to climate change, animal-heavy agriculture is extremely inefficient in terms of water use and land use, and manure spills into our rivers and streams and contaminates our water.

Speaking of human health...I don't have to tell you that about one-half of New York City children are overweight and therefore at higher risk of developing heart disease, diabetes,

asthma, cancer, and other chronic health problems often tied to poor diets that are low in plant fiber.

These are diseases that affect millions of New Yorkers. And if we don't solve this climate change crisis from every angle, billions of lives will be affected.

Therefore, Global Green Foundation encourages the Food Policy Taskforce to use its power to encourage the City Council ~~to~~: + state government to:

- 1.) create the conditions for individuals, institutions, and businesses to adopt low-carbon diets that have at their center local, organic, and plant-based foods; and
- 2.) expand the number of Greenmarkets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs throughout New York City, particularly in underserved communities
- 4.) set an initial goal for 50% of food served in city-run institutions (*inter alia* schools, colleges, hospitals, and prisons) to be local and/or organic produce within ten years, 25% within five years
- 5.) provide the necessary budget allocations to make this possible
- 6.) encourage the city, state, and federal governments, as an essential means of reducing New York City's GHG emissions and supporting the global fight against climate change, to enact policies that will make healthy, organic, and local plant-based foods available, accessible, and affordable to all City residents

Thanks so much for your time!



DANIELLE MARCHIONE
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
FOR
CITIZENS' COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN OF NEW YORK, INC.

BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON FOOD POLICY
FOOD POLICY LISTENING SESSION 3: NEW YORK CITY

APRIL 3, 2008

Good afternoon. My name is Danielle Marchione and I am the Director of Communications and Government Relations at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. (CCC). CCC is a 64-year-old independent multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe. We would like to thank the New York State Food Council Members for this opportunity.

Research documents that poor access to healthy, affordable food is contributing to growing rates of childhood obesity in New York City. Today 24% -- nearly one quarter -- of all children in our great city - that is nearly half a million children - are at risk of developing significant health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, depression, anxiety, and hypertension. Research also documents that the epidemic of childhood obesity and early onset of diabetes can be combated effectively by improving access to nutritious, affordable food where children and their families live.

And yet across New York City -- in East and Central Harlem, North and Central Brooklyn, the South Bronx as well as parts of Queens and Staten Island -- we know that too many families in New York City have limited access to healthy, affordable food. They do not have nearby supermarkets, green markets, or other food retail outlets within walking distance. In these communities, or "food deserts" the children are not only threatened with developing life threatening illnesses, but their adult caregivers are often also burdened by obesity, diabetes and heart disease at alarming rates.

CCC has conducted several focus groups with families in communities considered "food deserts." The parents we spoke to expressed the simple desire to come up out of the subway on their way home from work or from picking up their child from child care and to be able to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables they can afford. For these families, healthy eating is NOT simply a matter of personal responsibility; it is a matter of making healthy affordable food available in all communities for all New Yorkers.

Government needs to take a more active role in developing policies that increase affordable fresh food outlets in New York City's neighborhoods while promoting good, nutritious eating. The following proposals will make a healthy diet more affordable and accessible to all New Yorkers.

Increase access to quality food in neighborhoods with limited food retail options

- Fund transportation and distribution of upstate with limited transportation options to of New York State-grown produce to New York City's food deserts
 - Enhance the capacity of small independent grocers/bodegas to carry nutritious and affordable food – connecting them with the wholesale farmers market to purchase and sell healthy produce of quality
 - Encourage supermarkets to provide free shuttle services to consumers residing in food deserts
 - Assist grocery stores in maintaining acceptable food safety, pricing practices as well as adequate sanitary conditions, and post information online on supermarket inspection
 - Stimulate the development of new supermarkets/grocery stores in underserved neighborhoods
 - Conduct a needs assessment to develop a plan to stimulate the sale of healthy, affordable food in new and existing grocery stores
 - Improve the nutritional value of food available in schools
-
- **Promote the expansion of food co-ops, buying clubs and farmers' markets in low-income neighborhoods** by providing start-up funds and technical assistance to local not-for-profit organizations that can help organize co-ops, clubs and markets.
 - **Foster the creation of year-round indoor public markets** in NYCHA complexes and other government properties, where independent vendors could rent booths to sell fresh produce and quality pre-made meals/food.
 - **Expand community education efforts** to help inform consumers about where to access quality, nutritious food and to provide menu-planning information and ideas.
 - **Improve the nutritional value of government-subsidized foods** by establishing and supporting partnerships and collaborations between the city, state and federal nutrition assistance programs.
 - **Improve the take-up rate for government subsidized food programs** by facilitating enrollment in the Food Stamp and Women Infants and Children (WIC) programs and increasing participation of child care, Head Start and after school programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Nutritious food is the foundation for a healthy lifestyle. Whether New York State invests in new markets or enhances existing ones, provides transportation or more convenient distribution centers for fresh farm goods, the right combination of opportunities should be in place for each and every city across the state. Improving access to and increasing the availability of good food will create healthier families and children, more jobs and a stronger economy.

We thank you again for this opportunity and look forward to working with you to ensure that healthy and affordable food is available to all children and families in New York State.

Ann McMahon

From: Judith Weinraub [weinraub@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2008 10:41 AM
To: Ann McMahon
Subject: emailing testimony for April 3 listening session

Dear Ann McMahon,

I'm so sorry that other deadlines prevent me from attending the listening session (No. 1) on Thursday, which I had signed up for. So I'm sending you the testimony that I had planned to read, both in attachment form, and on this email below.

Thank you very much.

TESTIMONY FOR APRIL 3, 2008 LISTENING SESSION 1

In economic times like these, it's hard to find government money for just about any initiative that isn't mandated—even those designed to combat the most urgent problems.

It's clear, for example, that in the battle against childhood obesity and diabetes, the need for a diet based on healthful foods is great and immediate. But in this climate it's unlikely that additional federal funding for the fresh produce essential to good nutrition will be found for participants in either the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) or Food Stamp programs (that last projected to reach 28 million in the coming year).

The WIC program has tried to move forward by authorizing vouchers to purchase small amounts of fruit, whole wheat bread and vegetables. But unfortunately, the new regulations came out late and most of the more than 6 million eligible mothers and children won't receive these vouchers until late 2008 or early 2009 as states develop their ground rules.

These small amounts will be a useful step, but nowhere near enough to let families establish good eating habits. To that end, creative private funding is stepping in.

Starting June 1, at up to 65 farmers markets in upstate New York, an alliance between the Farmers' Market Federation of New York, the Manhattan-based Humpty Dumpty Institute (HDI) and Wholesome Wave in Westport, CT is supporting good nutrition with a program that will let WIC and Food Stamp recipients double their money for fruits and vegetables. Food stamp and WIC customers who spend five dollars on fresh produce at these markets, will receive tokens that allow them to buy twice that amount.

A similar effort—this one a partnership between the Watermelon Board and the Montgomery County MD Health Department-- has been operating successfully for the past two market seasons at the Crossroads Farmers Market only 14 miles away from the White House. At Crossroads, the market's low income neighbors who are Food Stamp or WIC recipients can increase their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables with tokens that let them double their money for produce purchased there. So for every ten dollars provided by the USDA, these shoppers can bring home ten additional dollars worth of nutritious seasonal foods.

Neither program requires additional federal dollars. Their sponsors are to be applauded, and whenever

possible, imitated.

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Judith Weinraub
W. K. Kellogg Food and Society Policy Fellow
27 West 72nd St, Apt. 515
New York, New York 10023
212-580-3082

Judith Weinraub

W.K. Kellogg Food and Society Policy Fellow 2007-2008
27 West. 72nd St., Apt. 515
New York, NY 10023
212-580-3082

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220 Church Street
5th Floor
New York, NY 10013-2988

voice: 646-619-6400
fax: 646-619-6777
www.healthsolutions.org

April 3, 2008

Commissioner Patrick Hooker
State of New York, Department of Agriculture and Markets
10B Airline Drive
Albany, NY 12235
Fax: 518-457- 3087

Dear Commissioner Hooker:

We are pleased that the New York State Food Policy Council is hosting today's hearing sessions. We believe the Council can play a highly meaningful role in reducing hunger, promoting improved nutrition, and fostering sustainable agriculture systems. We hope the Council will solicit and truly welcome public input from a broad array of interested individuals and organizations and suggest a series of regional 'listening tours' or roundtables be held throughout New York State to achieve this. The Council should quickly establish a number of advisory committees, representative of the food security movement's diversity, and give these committees a formal place in the Council's deliberations. This can only enrich the dialogue.

As a large not-for-profit public health agency that has been operating the largest WIC program (45,000 individuals served annually) in New York State for 33 years, we have a long-standing interest in and concern for nutritional issues. We would therefore like to share with you some of our thoughts and suggestions for the Council's action in its first term.

First and foremost, we believe it is crucial that the Council immediately develop a comprehensive plan to assure that all New Yorkers who are eligible for food entitlements such as food stamps, farmers' market coupons, WIC checks and others can readily obtain them. Even after many government attempts to facilitate enrollment, large numbers of eligible families still remain without these benefits even when they know about them and have tried to obtain them.

Such a plan should include:

- **Increases in the State budget sufficient to carry out a rigorous, long-term, state-wide campaign aimed at making everyone aware of the availability of these benefits**
- **Meaningful additional improvements in the facilitation of enrollment such as a uniform on-line and paper system for New Yorkers to apply simultaneously for food stamps, school meals, and other nutrition benefits**
- **Providing increased resources to low-income individuals to use farmers markets and food stamps (e.g., California doubles the value of food stamps used at such outlets)**

- **Assistance for bodegas/convenience stores to increase their refrigeration capacity to store more low-fat dairy products and fresh fruits and vegetables (other states have done this)**

On a more general level, we believe the Council should adopt the objectives laid out by the Food Policy Council legislation developed by Assembly member Ortiz and Senator Young.

Using numerical goals and timetables, the Council should aim to achieve:

- **A quantified reduction in, and the ultimate prevention of, hunger and food insecurity by assuring that all New York State residents have easy immediate access to high quality, safe, affordable, culturally-appropriate and nutritious food - from local food producers whenever possible -through adequate purchasing power - including benefits provided by food assistance programs - and the necessary facilities to prepare food**
- **Adoption by all New Yorkers of a diet that promotes good health and prevents food-and diet-related diseases throughout their life spans and includes, whenever possible, locally-produced foods**
- **Increased consumer and business demand for New York farm and food products**
- **A flourishing and profitable food-production system in New York State, which maximizes production of nutritious foods, preserves and protects open space and the environment and provides sufficient income for farm families and workers**
- **Economic viability for the state's food processing, marketing, and distribution industries that support the state's farms and food businesses**

Barriers to reaching these established targets should be documented, including distribution and transportation problems and access to small scale food processing. The Council should also seek ways of facilitating and making diversified farming more profitable, particularly for smaller farmers, as this would assist in increasing the availability of locally grown food.

One issue that we had hoped the Governor and legislative leaders would have resolved by now is passage of the Healthy Schools Act. This, because it would provide significant opportunities to improve the nutritional well-being of our children, including improving the nutritional quality of their meals while promoting locally grown fruit and vegetables. This is an issue on which the Food Policy Council could and should provide energetic leadership.

The Executive Order establishing the Council requires

"...a written report on the first day of December each year on: (a) the activities of the Council during the preceding year; (b) recommended food policies for the State; (c) recommended changes to the strategic plan; (d) an account of the progress made in achieving the goals of the Council; and (e) actions which are necessary to implement the recommendations of the Council and effectuate the purposes of this Order."

While we realize this is a very short time frame for 2007, we believe that transparency is critical in the work of the Council and that the key parts of the reports, such as recommended food policies and changes to the strategic plan, should be shared with stakeholders before their submission for public input and comment. We believe that recommendations included in the Five-Year Plan developed by the prior Food Policy Council under Governor Cuomo would be an excellent starting point.

We thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts and look forward to working with the Council to achieve food security in New York State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stacey Lea Flanagan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "L".

Stacey Lea Flanagan
Deputy Director, Public Health Programs

>>> Kathy Dischner <kmd13@cornell.edu> 3/12/2008 11:42 AM >>>
Hello all,

Kathy Dischner

First- I wish to thank all of you, our excellent presenters, Chris, Jennifer and Ray for their information, insights, ideas and enthusiasm. I also wish to thank of all you who took the time and effort to participate and learn more about ways to help change the way you provide nutritious food for the children in your districts. We need more adults dedicated to the health and well being of our children as you all are.

Below is a list of concerns that were expressed concerning implementing a Successful Farm-to-School Program in your districts. Ray is planning on sharing these with the NYS Food Policy Council members at the upcoming meetings.

Concerns expressed at the 3.11.08 Farm- to-Cafeteria Workshop in Syracuse, NY from 50 participants representing 24 school districts in eight counties in CNY:

1. Problems with infrastructure that include transportation and delivery from farm to school.
2. The need to have produce processed in usable form to reduce food preparation time/labor expense to schools. (This was categorized as "value added" product needed.)
3. Schools need up-to-date Directories of Farms who can provide produce/other farm products by zip code
4. Cost factor- how to reconcile the interest for schools to purchase fresh local products, including produce with the farmer's need to profit from the sales.
5. General concerns with equipment and labor costs at school level (cost of equipment, space, logistics related to "heat and serve" only systems at many school buildings.)

Kathy Dischner, MSED, CD/N, RD
Team Leader- Nutrition, Health and Food Safety
President- Central New York Dietetic Association
Cornell University Cooperative Extension- Onondaga County
220 Herald Place- 2nd floor Syracuse, NY 13202
Phone: 315-424-9485 -Ext. 239 Fax:315-424-7056 kmd13@cornell.edu
Visit our website: www.cce.cornell.edu/onondaga