NEW YORK STATE FOOD POLICY COUNCIL: LONG ISLAND FOOD BANK HEARING

Harry Chapin and I met in September of 1973 when he was a guest on my ABC Radio Network show "On This Rock." We immediately began to talk about what we could do together to fight hunger and poverty. Our initial focus was on international hunger and poverty especially the drought in the Sahelian region of Africa.

We quickly expanded our horizons to U.S. hunger and poverty and then the shocking amount of poverty right in our backyard here on Long Island in the midst of wealth and prosperity. Even before we co-founded WhyHunger, then called World Hunger Year in 1975 Harry testified at a hearing about hunger and poverty in Long Island. We knew that there was a new anti- hunger effort called food banks that started in Phoenix. Food banks collected food donated by individuals, places of worship and businesses but many of the businesses were wary because they were afraid they would be sued if anyone was harmed from food they donated. Harry testified at a hearing on Long Island on behalf of a good faith donor bill to hold harmless businesses that donated food if someone became sick from the food as long as there was no intention to harm. That bill opened the door to massive donations of food from America's food companies.

In 1980 Harry and his wife Sandy Chapin and I worked to establish a food bank on Long Island. Harry died on July 16, 1981 and Long Island Cares opened soon after. Over the years the food bank, now named The Harry Chapin Food Bank has provided food to more than 6oo emergency food providers in Nassau and Suffolk counties and helped feed hundreds of thousands of hungry Long Islanders.

From the beginning though, the food bank wanted to be much more than an emergency food provider. All of us believed that the root cause of hunger is poverty and the root cause of poverty is powerlessness. Therefore the food bank has always had a job training program and in recent years it has become a multi service organization helping people to get out of poverty by connecting them to job training, housing, education, medical services and all the federal hunger and poverty programs. I am proud of the work that the Harry Chapin Food Bank has done and the many services they provide.

WhyHunger is a grassroots support organization that works with dozens of food banks and thousands of community based organizations all across the country. We run the National Hunger Clearinghouse and the National Hunger Hotline in partnership with the USDA Food and Nutrition Services. We answer the phones at 1-866-3-HUNGRY and connect people to emergency food in their neighborhood and all the federal hunger programs, especially SNAP, WIC and Summer Food.

We provide a whole range of information and funding connections to emergency food providers including food banks. We have raised more than $12 MILLION for several hundred grassroots

organizations through our Artists Against Hunger and Poverty program supported by dozens of artists headed by Bruce Springsteen. We have also funded more than 150 grassroots organizations through our Harry Chapin Self-Reliance Awards and through several other sources. We also provide technical training to emergency food providers and resources such as Cooking Up Community an online collection of the best nutrition education programs in America at www.whyhunger.org/cookingupcommunity and Beyond Bread alternate sources of nutritious food at www.whyhunger.org/beyondbread.

Over the years we have worked with dozens of food banks and hundreds of their affiliates to encourage them to move beyond the charity model of relief to promoting self-reliance and economic and food justice as well as improving the quality of food they distribute. We always encourage them to partner with several other agencies in their communities to strengthen the quality and quantity of their services.

Bill Ayres

Co-Founder and Executive Director

WhyHunger

New York State Council on Food Policy Listening Tour, 9/30/14, Happauge, NY

Comments From Long Island Farm to Preschool program, Child Care Council of Nassau, Inc., Franklin Square, NY

Long Island Farm to Preschool is sponsored by Child Care Council of Nassau, Inc. through a grant from the New York State Department of Health, and is an extension of the Eat Well Play Hard in Child Care Settings (EWPHCCS) program. The project aims to connect preschool children in child care and their parents/caregivers with local farmers and their products.

The project involves researching and arranging for the delivery of fresh produce to be offered for sale on site at three low-income child care centers that are approved for EWPHCCS implementation.

Long Island Farm to Preschool is conducting farmers markets at three child care centers in Nassau County, with two farmers attending each market. The markets run weekly during dismissal time at the centers from July through October.

The project also involves an educational component, consisting of on-site food tastings and demonstrations on how to use the produce that is for sale. Additionally, educational materials such as recipes, newsletters and informational handouts are provided each week. The sites are also given a gardening curriculum and gardening-centered toolkit items to implement indoor or outdoor gardening activities in the centers.

As a whole, the project is an effort to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables – preferably locally grown – by providing convenience and access to fresh produce, and offering guidance in how to use it. Performance measures include: the number of purchasing transactions, the number of parents of children in child care who are purchasing produce, the number of customers purchasing produce, the number of WIC Farmers Market coupons redeemed, and the amount of SNAP benefits used to purchase the produce.

The first key issue of **'strengthening the connection between local food products and consumers'** is one that is of great concern for us. While our markets do assist in creating a direct connection between parents/caregivers and staff at the child care centers we work with, we feel that connection is somewhat lost when it comes to meals provided for the children in care during the day. One of our centers provides their own snacks for the children and has purchased produce to use for snacks several times throughout the season. The other two centers we work with rely solely on caterers to provide all of their meals and snacks. Although I believe the quality of food provided by the caterers is good, it would be even better if the caterers were to be able to utilize local, fresh produce in the meals they prepare for the children. Though we have not yet approached the caterers with this possibility,

we know that cost, transportation and convenience are some of the issues that could arise. How can we help to incentivize the purchasing of local food for the caterers and centers that feed children in care?

The last key issue of **'maximizing participation in food and nutrition assistance programs'** is another topic of great relevance to our program. This season, all of our markets accept SNAP/EBT benefits, WIC and Senior FMNP program checks, as well as provide $2 Fresh Connect checks for SNAP users. With four weeks left in the season, our three markets have become very successful. Over 12 weeks, they have generated close to $20,000 in sales, collected almost $4,000 in WIC FMNP checks, and over $1,000 in Senior FMNP checks. Comparatively, we have generated only $224 in EBT sales this season.

Through contact with the Nassau County WIC office, we were able to be included in the farmer's market list that goes out to the WIC check recipients. We received a great response and generated a large amount of sales through the FMNP program. However, SNAP sales have been slow, and we would love to be able to increase them in the coming season. How can we further support participation in SNAP at farmer's markets, as well publicize the benefits of the Fresh Connect program?

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NYS Council on Food Policy, Suffolk County Listening Event
"Farm, Food and Policy: Getting It Right in New York State"
September 30, 2014, Dennison Building, Hauppauge
Statement by Gwen O'Shea, President/CEO,
Health and Welfare Council of Long Island

Hello. My name is Gwen O'Shea, and I am the President/CEO of the Health and Welfare Council of Long Island (HWCLI), an umbrella group of health and human service providers on Long Island that has been advocating for the most vulnerable and at risk since 1947. I would like to thank the New York State Council on Food Policy for the opportunity to provide comments today.

HWCLI has long shared the council's key issue area of "maximizing participation in food and nutrition assistance programs." For more than 25 years, HWCLI has provided SNAP education and enrollment assistance as part of the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program, an initiative managed by Hunger Solutions New York, and convened the Anti-Hunger Task Force to coordinate government and non-governmental agencies providing emergency food assistance, nutrition assistance programs and other anti-poverty efforts. Additionally, for the past three years, HWCLI has coordinated the Long Island Anti-Hunger Initiative, a partnership of HWCLI, AARP New York, the Food Research and Action Center, Hunger Solutions New York, Island Harvest, North Shore-LIJ Health System, and United Way of Long Island that focuses on innovative outreach techniques for SNAP. HWCLI also participates in the Suffolk County Food Policy Council. And through direct advocacy with elected officials, HWCLI works to protect and strengthen nutrition assistance programs so that they can continue to reduce poverty and hunger in Nassau and Suffolk Counties and help foster a culture of healthy eating on Long Island.

With my comments today, I would like to focus on three areas:

- Food insecurity and poverty on Long Island
- Barriers preventing maximum participation in SNAP on Long Island
- Strategies being used in other benefit programs that could help maximize SNAP participation

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However, first, I would like to thank the New York State Council on Food Policy for its ongoing support for SNAP education and outreach, as well as its work to increase access to farmers markets for New Yorkers participating in food assistance programs such as WIC and SNAP.

Food Insecurity and Poverty on Long Island

Food insecurity continues to be a significant issue on Long Island, and SNAP, one of the only government benefit programs to respond to economic downturns, remains a vital support for tens of thousands of Long Islanders. According to the most recent publicly released data on SNAP enrollment, more than 196,000 people in Suffolk and Nassau Counties were participating in the program in July 2014 — 65 percent of them in Suffolk. That is an increase of 196 percent since July 2007, before the onset of the most recent recession.

Although the national media continue to report that the U.S. economy is in the midst of recovery, HWCLI and its members have yet to see this recovery take hold among its clients. This lag of Long Island behind the nation overall can be seen in the latest poverty data. This month, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that in 2013, the national poverty rate fell for the first time since 2006, from 15 percent in 2012 to 14.5 percent. However, on Long Island, there was no statistically significant change in the poverty rate in either county from 2012 to 2013. The median household income in 2013 in both Nassau and Suffolk counties was lower than it was in 2009.

One factor in Long Island's economic stagnation is the loss of higher-income jobs that are often replaced with lower-income ones — a trend that will only continue to lead to economic insecurity for many Long Islanders, who must also deal with the region's extremely high cost of living. According to research done for the New York State Self-Sufficiency Standard Steering Committee by the University of Washington, a Suffolk household of four made up of two adults, a preschooler and a school-age teenager requires $98, 071 to cover the family's basic necessities. The corresponding figure for Nassau is $91,444.

Housing costs are especially challenging for Long Islanders, who face a short supply of affordable housing and rental housing. According to the 2014 Vital Signs report, a project of Adelphi University that tracks social health indicators on Long Island, only about 21 percent of the housing stock on Long Island is rentals. That compares to 33 percent in Western Connecticut and 37 percent in northern New Jersey, according to the report. The tight supply of rental housing and affordable housing contributes to an increasing cost burden of housing on Long Island. According to a March 2014 report from the New York State Comptroller, 53.2 percent of Nassau renters and 54 percent of Suffolk renters had housing costs above the affordability threshold of 30 percent of household income in 2012. For many, this heavy housing cost burden leaves an insufficient amount of money to go toward other basic necessities such as food. For these Long Islanders, SNAP benefits are an essential part of making ends meet every month. Because of the insufficiency of the SNAP benefit amount, which averages $1.53 per meal, some Long Islanders exhaust their monthly benefit before the end of the month, contributing to food insecurity and adding to the already high level of demand on emergency food providers.

In addition to this difficult economic situation, the nearly 200,000 Long Islanders who participate in the SNAP program, along with every other SNAP recipient in the country, experienced a reduction in their benefit amount on Nov. 1, 2013. On Long Island, as in other areas of the country, this reduction was followed by increased demand at emergency food providers.[1]

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[1] Eichberg, S. (2014). Vital Signs 2014—Measuring Long Island's Social Health. Garden City, New York: Adelphi University. Page 4.

Barriers to SNAP Participation on Long Island

Long Island has region-specific challenges that prevent vulnerable communities from easily accessing nutrition assistance programs. Among them are:

Limited Public Transportation Options: Long Island's public transportation system is inadequate for a region of such vast geographic size and more than 2 million people. Vulnerable Long Islanders who do not have access to a computer or may need assistance with their SNAP application — such as seniors, people with disabilities or people with limited English proficiency — have limited options beyond owning a car for traveling to the department of social services or nonprofit agencies that may be able to assist them. According to a 2013 community needs assessment of Suffolk County commissioned by HWCLI and conducted by the Center for Governmental Research, bus routes are often not convenient for accessing employers or other services and lead to long waits and long trips.

Stigma and Other Senior-Specific Challenges: Long Island's population continues to age. For example, between 2000 and 2012, the number of Suffolk residents aged 60 through 84 increased by 33 percent and the 85-and-older population grew 51 percent. An estimated 85 percent of seniors in Nassau and Suffolk Counties are eligible for SNAP but not receiving benefits, according to an AARP analysis. Among the barriers that contribute to underparticipation rates among seniors, according to a 2013 report from AARP New York, are stigma and myths about the program, difficulty in navigating the SNAP application, inadequate benefit amounts, cultural and language barriers, and the lack of access due to transportation and geographic locations. As Long Island's senior population continues to grow, it will be important to take into consideration these population-specific barriers.

Possible Models to Consider

HWCLI provides navigation services through New York State's Navigator program, helping Long Islanders enroll into health insurance plans such as Medicaid and Child Health Plus through the state's online marketplace, New York State of Health. As this new program has rolled out, with new technological systems and new tools, HWCLI has observed some changes that could offer ideas to help increase access to SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs.

Integrated Online Application Processing: The creation of the online marketplace as a technological system that is connected to other government data sources and is therefore able to offer instantaneous eligibility determinations has streamlined the application and determination process for Medicaid tremendously. Previously, applicants were required to submit multiple documents verifying everything from identity to income, much as current SNAP applicants are required to do. In the new marketplace system, submission of documents is not required in most cases. Recognizing that there is significant overlap in the population of those eligible for SNAP and Medicaid, it would be beneficial to add SNAP application processing to the marketplace so that New Yorkers can gain access to these two crucial safety net supports at the same time and through this more efficient process.

Call Center: As part of the marketplace system, the state created a call center staffed with state workers able to answer questions and enroll New Yorkers into Medicaid and Child Health Plus over the phone. This has provided New Yorkers with another avenue to access the Medicaid program. Giving SNAP applicants this option could lead to an increase of eligible applications, especially among seniors and people with disabilities. Additionally, the call center has standardized assistance, decreasing the amount of misinformation being given to clients.

While "hotlines" and call centers have been made available in the past for SNAP, a major component of the health insurance marketplace call center's success is based on the establishment of an online application process. The marketplace portal drives major volume to the call center based on the significant amount of marketing done related to the creation of the marketplace. Having a call center without the online portal would potentially decrease the level of utilization.

Suffolk County's Department of Social Services has taken steps to streamline operations and improve service to clients, including by moving forward on using scans and kiosks in their centers.

Centralized Application Processing: With the adoption of the marketplace, a significant amount of the eligibility determinations have moved from the county to the state level. The centralization of this task has streamlined the process and has resulted in equal treatment of applicants and program participants across the entire region. The individuals and families that HWCLI and its members serve are often transient and move freely between Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Interacting with the state would allow for consistent customer service and familiar systems for Long Islanders no matter which county they reside in. Another benefit to centralized application management at the state level would be a consistent renewal process that could prevent some clients from losing access to their benefits because they have moved.

A centralized SNAP system at the state level could also help prevent disparate treatment of regions following disasters. After Superstorm Sandy, when affected areas had the option to implement a Disaster SNAP program, New York City and Westchester County chose to do so while Nassau and Suffolk counties did not. (D-SNAP extends benefits to many households that would not ordinarily be eligible for SNAP but are in need because of the impact of a disaster.) This series of decisions left Nassau and Suffolk residents without access to an important support that could have hastened their recovery.

Final Thoughts

Finally, I'd like to touch on an exciting opportunity for eligible school districts to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students. Although the Community Eligibility option has been available in New York for two years, it is our understanding that possibly only one district on Long Island has taken advantage of this provision even though the state has identified about 25 districts that have at least one campus that might be eligible. I'd like to encourage the council to further study whether there are particular barriers within a suburban region such as Long Island, with its more than 100 school districts, to participating in Community Eligibility, which can increase participation in school meal programs through reduction of stigma and other effects.

Thank you.

New York State Council on Food Policy
Listening Session September 30, 2014
Comments Submitted by the Amagansett Food institute

Thank you for providing us with this opportunity to submit comments to the Listening Session.

The Amagansett Food institute (AFI) is a non-profit organization founded in 2010 with the mission of supporting, promoting and advocating for local food and the farmers and food producers of the East End of Long Island. AFI currently has approximately 40 business members including farmers, fishers, bakers cheese makers and producers of a variety of other products made from locally grown food. AFI supports local food production through a variety of programs which support the economic viability of local food businesses. Two programs of particular relevance to today's session are: a food business incubator known as South Fork Kitchens located on the Southampton campus of Stony Brook University. This incubator, which includes a fully licensed and equipped commercial kitchen, provides a home for small food producers, providing them with use of the kitchen, storage and other services. AFI also operates a program called Farm to Pantry, a partnership with Long Island Cares in which we aggregate and sell local, organically grown produce, most of which is surplus, to Long Island Cares for distribution to food pantries all over Long Island. AFI was also recently awarded a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture Local Food Promotion Program to conduct a feasibility study for a local East End Food Hub.

Food Security and Access

The Council on Food Policy and the NYS Department of Health have reason to be proud of the steps New York State has taken to encourage the purchase of healthy local food in the HPNAP program. The use of a separate budget line for produce purchase has made programs such as our Farm to Pantry project possible. In a state as large as New York, however, defining "local" as grown in the State, does not go far enough to encourage purchases from smaller local farms and food hubs. AFI would like to see a preference expressed for truly local (within 100 miles) or regional procurement wherever possible. Based upon our experience, we believe that sourcing local produce from area farms and food hubs would have a number of positive effects: the food is fresher, this means that it retains more of its nutrients and flavor and will last longer in the home. People are just more likely to eat healthy food if it tastes better, and fresher food not only tastes better, but requires less in the way of preparation to taste great. From an economic development standpoint, a local preference would open markets to local farms which may currently be closed to them. Finally, the opportunity to know where the food is coming from leads to a closer relationship between the pantry user and the farm which in turn, opens the door to a better and more diverse diet.

In addition to creating a preference for local food, it would be helpful if the HPNAP program recognized that better food is sometimes more expensive food. We recognize that food security programs are always faced with the dilemma of whether to provide more food or better food. The choice to require fresh produce is a choice in favor of better food. We believe that local, organic produce is the best food. It is, however, more expensive to produce that food on the East End of Long Island than in some other

areas of the State. HPNAP recipient agencies should be rewarded for buying local by receiving higher grant awards to pay for the higher quality produce.

Our experience with Farm to Pantry has also led us to believe that there is still serious need for food education across all economic levels in the community. Frequently we are told that a given food product is just not acceptable for purchase or even donation to food pantries. For example, our farmers grow a number of varieties of carrots, some are orange, but some are red or yellow. We have been told that "people won't eat" the red carrots –carrots have to be orange! The same issue arises with certain varieties of squash, turnips and potatoes. This is not a cultural issue, this is about a perception that something is wrong with the vegetable or that it is somehow strange. To some extent the people making the purchases have food prejudices which are being imposed on the end users. We believe that an increase in food demonstrations and education can easily break down some of these food prejudices and help create more diverse and healthy diets for New Yorkers. Young children are particularly open to expanding their food horizons through good educational experiences. AFI proposes an increase in funding for such programs, whether through the Fresh Connect program or through other funded programs.

Food Production

Through its South Fork Kitchens incubator program, AFI is supporting a number of local food producers who use local farm products to create added value or processed food. For example, a small local farm re-introduced the growing of wheat on the South Fork several years ago. A local baker has developed a business making bread with this locally grown wheat. As she demonstrated that there is a market for this product, several other farms began to grow wheat for processing into flour for her bread. Farmers are now discussing the possibility of growing other grains for gluten free products. This has led to growth in the baker's business and the development of a whole new farm product on the East End. This is a small example of the synergies possible in a local food community. Small scale food production using local farm products benefits the local economy by creating jobs, supporting farms and creating healthy food options.

Programs such as ours can use more governmental support. While we have developed referral agreements with local economic development programs, we would like to have some capacity within the incubator to assist intending small businesses to develop business plans and pursue appropriate licenses. We currently have no ability to provide reduced rate services for low-income or MWBE businesses. AFI proposes an increase in funding for economic development specifically targeted to food and agriculture.

Other Support for Farmers

For many years Farmer's Markets have provided the entry point for new farms and food producers, giving them easy access to a customer base and bringing the bounty of the farm community to urban and suburban areas in the State. Many local communities such as ours are reaching or have reached a saturation point where the addition of a new market only serves to reduce sales in the existing markets. If growth in local and organic farming is to be encouraged, there need to be new models for the sale of agricultural and related products. AFI urges the New York State Council on Food Policy to continue to

lead in this area by supporting the development of local food hubs, creating new incentives or requirements for local procurement and otherwise reducing barriers to sale.
Global warming increased fuel costs, food recalls, the drought in California—all these things bring home to us the need to be able to provide our basic food needs in a local and sustainable manner. At the same time, the resurgence in interest in farming and food businesses among younger people provides an opportunity to build a very different food future. We need to embrace this future!

Thank you.

Submitted By:
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September 30, 2014

To the New York State Council on Food Policy:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments concerning NY State farm to school policy, as I was unable to attend today's meeting in person.

The focus of my comments is the role of the NY OGS warehouse system in distributing healthy NY farm products to the state's school children. I will review recent progress and discuss OGS' key role in expanding farm to school for more students, in more regions, including more NY farm products. One of these products is our antibiotic free Slope Farm to School ground beef, which is raised and processed in NY State.

In its system of OGS warehouse, NY State already owns both the physical plant and system for distributing food to schools in each region of the state. For many years, the eight regional Office of General Service warehouses have distributed the commodity foods purchased by schools across the state.

This OGS infrastructure can also distribute NY State farm products to schools, to the benefit of the farm economy and the health of our school children.

Since 2011, a OGS pilot program on Long Island has helped supply New York grown fruits and vegetables purchased by the 36 school districts in the Long Island School Nutrition Coop. NY OGS does not purchase the food. Rather, OGS permits the local produce to 'piggyback' on the existing distribution of USDA commodity foods that schools purchase. Access to OGS for distribution has been a key to the success of this program on Long Island.

Without OGS distribution the cost of trucking to multiple schools becomes prohibitive. (Not to mention the unnecessary burning of fossil fuel for delivery). But the Long Island program has been a "one off program" that relies on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that allows Shulman Produce to distribute via the LI OGS warehouse. The other regional warehouses are not being used for NY farm to school.

To discuss the goals of expanding the Long Island program to include other NY farm products, and other regions of the state, there was a meeting in June 2014 with OGS Commissioner Destito and Assemblyman Englebright, their staffs, school food directors from NY State, the originators of the LI program, school food activists, farm to school suppliers, and representatives of NY State Dept. of Ag and Markets. There appeared to be a good deal of interest on the part of the Commissioner and the Assemblyman in furthering these goals.

After the meeting, Slope Farm to School received a commitment from OGS for an MOU to permit distribution of frozen NY antibiotic free beef to LI schools through the LI warehouse. This will be he first expansion of the LI program beyond produce. I believe this commitment was because of an understanding of the public health and state economic development value of using antibiotic free beef raised and processed in NY. And because we are already serving four schools on Long Island after being awarded the bid by the Long Island Coop for NY antibiotic free beef.

We are very grateful to Commissioner Destito and Annemarie Garceau, the OGS Director of Food Distribution, for committing to this MOU. Access to OGS distribution will allow Slope Farm to School to supply this healthier NY beef to more schools at a better price because of lower distribution costs. There are additional schools who are requesting Slope Farm to School beef but, because of distance and distribution cost, we've been unable serve them without the MOU.

Beyond Long Island are seven more NY OGS regional warehouses that could help distribute healthy NY State farm products to over a million additional NY K-12 students. The state contracts with private companies to distribute commodity foods to schools via these warehouses. But the current contracts do not include NY farm to school distribution. From my conversations with attorneys who have researched this question, my understanding is that the contracts permit NY State to amend the contract with a month's notice.

In our June conversation with Commissioner Destito and Assemblyman Englebright, there was discussion of expanding the farm to school program to the schools serviced by one addition regional warehouse upstate, and I believe there has been further discussion toward that limited goal.

In terms of policy, I would request that the Council recommend that NY expand the Long Island farm to school program to include all other regional warehouses in the state. In carrying out this policy, the state would exercise its right to revise its contracts with the warehouse operators to include distribution of NY farm to school products purchased by schools. In terms of budgeting, OGS should be funded to carry out the additional warehousing and inventory management this would entail.

Using this existing infrastructure for distributing NY farm products to schools would meaningfully benefit the states farm economy, and improve the freshness and healthfulness of school lunches served to children in New York.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Jaffe, MD
Slope Farm to School

grown ON LONG ISLAND Long Island Farm Bureau

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Testimony before NYS Council on Food Policy – H. Lee Dennison Building, Hauppauge, NY, September 30, 2014.

Good Afternoon. My name is Joseph Gergela. I am currently Executive Director of Long Island Farm Bureau a 4,300 member farm organization.

I would like to thank NYS Agriculture Commissioner Richard Ball for holding this forum and for the opportunity for the farm community to put on the table some of the issues facing Long Island agriculture.

1. Long Island farmers have been adversely affected by the general downturn in our economy. The most significant factor for all farmers is the cost of production for all commodities and it is based upon the price of oil. Energy products such as diesel fuel, gas, heating oil, farm chemicals, and fertilizer are all produced derivatives of the oil industry. Our cost per acre for all crops has risen dramatically over the last 5 years, while prices received for farm products have not increased proportionally to the cost of doing business. Farmers are price takers and just because our costs have risen does not mean we can tell our buyers that they must pay more for our products. Farmers must compete in the world market including instate and neighboring states, and in other countries where the cost of production is cheaper then New York and Long Island.

2. Labor – LIFB and all farmers in New York are deeply concerned about having a legal labor pool to plant, maintain, and harvest all agricultural commodities. LIFB would like to request that the New York State Senate, Assembly and the Governor pass legislatively a Sense Resolution urging the US Congress develop and implement an Agriculture Worker Visa Program to address our labor needs as an industry. We at Farm Bureau would be happy to work with you on the language for that Sense Resolution.

3. Farmland Preservation – The best farmland preservation and protection program we know is for farming to be profitable. With that said, farmland is a finite natural resource. Here in Suffolk County we have 34,000 acres available for production agriculture. Approximately 15,000 acres have been protected with conservation easements (purchasing the development rights) to guarantee we will have land available for future generations. Suffolk County was the first county in the United States to recognize the need to have a publicly funded program to provide landowners with an alternative to development. Suffolk County and the local governments within have spent a billion dollars for open space and farmland, more than any place in the United States. With the current economic climate, it will be challenging for local and county governments across the state to

make land preservation a priority. For us in Suffolk County we need to continue our farmland preservation efforts so that we can have a critical mass of farmland to sustain the ancillary infra-structure of agriculture ie: equipment/tractor dealers, supply companies, marketers, packaging, etc. It is time for New York State to consider a more serious commitment to farmland preservation and protection before it is too late for areas competing with bulldozers for land. New York State has a budget of over 120 billion dollars, yet only dedicates a few million a year statewide for that purpose. New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets protection programs are under funded to meet request and demand across the state.

4. Increase protection and funding for New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets should be a top priority for the Senate and Assembly going forward in the future. Agriculture and Markets' mission is to help foster agriculture in New York State. Farmers rely on New York State Agriculture and Markets to enforce the provision of protection written in both Agriculture and Markets and Ag Districts Laws. The demographics of our state is changing with the encroachment of suburbia into farming areas. With that comes many challenges on land use policies, local governance/politics and it is New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets that farmers rely on to defend our "Right to Farm" from over restrictive policies. As suburbia grows, people are losing their awareness of agriculture and unknowingly try to restrict farmers from conducting normal farming practices and therefore having a strong Department of Agriculture & Markets is vital for the industry going forward for the future.

5. Environmental Stewardship – we like to say that farmers are active environmentalist not environmental activist. Long Island depends upon a sole source aquifer for our drinking water supply for all residence. The aquifer is also drawn upon for farmers ability to irrigate our crops. As early as the late 1970s, it was discovered that chemicals used as crop protectants were being found in our groundwater supply. Since that time, Long Island farmers have cooperated with USDA and Agriculture and Markets, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District, DEC and other organizations to develop and utilize agricultural environmental management principles to protect groundwater and surface waters. There are two areas of concern for farmers.

    1. Agriculture has been unfairly targeted for nutrient contamination of ground and surface water. We have a population in Suffolk County of 1.5 million people. It has been acknowledged by scientists that over 50% of the nutrient in water is from outdated and inefficient septic systems, cesspools and sewage treatment plants. We cannot produce crops without nutrients in some form whether organic or inorganic fertilizers or other forms of nutrients used by farmers. (There is no substitute for nutrients).

    2. We are working on partnering with DEC on the Pesticide Management Plan. One concept of the plan is the notion of zero tolerance. Today with

modern testing chemicals are found in parts per billion in groundwater. Those minute amounts should not be cause to remove crop protectants for farmers use and that ability to protect their investments in whatever commodity they are producing. As an example, scientists have discovered pharmaceuticals in groundwater in parts per billion. If there was zero tolerance does that mean we would ban medicines? Pesticide use policy in New York must be done in a risk assessment/cost benefit analysis to insure real science is used in decision making, not political science.

Long Island and New York Farm Bureaus encourage a more streamlined registration process to ensure our growers have access to new technologies and newer crop protectants to replace older products that may negatively impact our environment. We would encourage New York State to consider eliminating the duel pesticide products registration used in New York. In many cases it is redundant to what the US EPA already requires and has determined that products are safe for agriculture uses.

6. Marketing – There is a high demand for local food production sought by our citizens. New York and Long Island farmers traditionally have produced top quality fruits, produce, wine and other commodities, but we have done a poor job marketing to the public. As an example, in the last 30 years, the Long Island Region has blossomed with 50 wineries producing world class wine. Both the food and wine section of agriculture need some state assistance in helping the industry garner more market shares in order to remain economically viable. Long Island Wine Council, Long Island Farm Bureau and other industry groups promote and advertise as much as possible with very little resources to adequately do that job. Long Island Farm Bureau would ask the Senate to take a look at this issue to see any possibility of increasing funding for promotion and marketing.

7. Aquaculture – Suffolk County and New York State have developed an Aquaculture Lease Program to make access of our bay bottoms available to existing and new entrepreneurs who would like to commence aquaculture as a means to produce shellfish. Currently there are about 2 dozen existing aquaculture operations. Long Island Farm Bureau sees this as an industry with economic growth potential. Water quality in our bays and surface waters is an important issue. Adequate inspections of waters is a necessity to protect public health. We need adequate staffing at the Marine Programs at DEC in order to manage the resources and accomplish this job.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you this afternoon. As always, we will be glad to work with you in future endeavors to help strengthen the Agricultural Industry on Long Island and in New York State.

Statement by…
Michael W. Haynes, MPA
Manager of Government Affairs & Veteran Services
Long Island Cares, Inc.—The Harry Chapin Food Bank

To

New York State Council on Food Policy
"Farm, Food and Policy: Getting it Right in New York State"
Tuesday September 30, 2014
H. Lee Dennison Building, 100 Veterans Hwy, Hauppauge, NY

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to address the members of the New York State Council on Food Policy as you travel throughout New York listening and gathering information on the health and nutritional well-being of our residents. As the Manager of Government Affairs and Veteran Services for Long Island Cares, Inc.—The Harry Chapin Food Bank, I am extremely proud to work for an organization that strives to meet the needs of greater than 316,000 food insecure Long Islanders through the successful partnership we share with our network of over 600 member agencies (i.e. soup kitchens, food pantries, senior centers, and day care centers) and our own array of direct service initiatives including a mobile pantry, homeless outreach unit, and nutrition education services.

When discussing what is right in New York State regarding food policy, the fact we have a Governor who openly discusses hunger during his State of the State Addresses must be acknowledged and applauded. Historically, politicians stay away from hunger and consequently a life or death issue is usually and reprehensively swept under the rug. Today, at least in New York, things are different. In addition to Gov. Cuomo, we also are fortunate to have State Senators and Assembly Members that are not afraid to publicly declare that 2,758,740 food insecure New Yorkers constitutes a public health crisis that must be immediately addressed.

In his 2013 address, Gov. Cuomo stressed the necessity of creating the body I now testify before, *the New York State Council on Food Policy.* Moreover, 2013 was the year the Governor announced the creation of the New York State Anti-Hunger Task Force, which brings together experts, advocates, and state and local officials to develop and implement action-focused recommendations to combat hunger and improve access to locally grown and produced fresh foods. Long Island Cares is proud to be a member of the New York State Food Bank Association which has a seat on this task force. Then in his 2014 address, he announced his plan to host a new Upstate-Downstate Food-to-Table Agriculture Summit focused on linking our upstate agriculture industry and downstate consumers to create a self-sustaining agricultural-commercial

ecosystem in New York by maximizing the procurement of local food by public schools and government agencies to increase access to produce in underserved communities. Moreover, the Governor acted when New York's food insecure population needed him most. Under the directive of Governor Cuomo, New York State preserved approximately $457 million a year in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits that would have otherwise been cut by the federal Farm Bill this past February. Impacted households were slated to lose $127 in SNAP benefits each month. This action taken by the State saved benefits for nearly 300,000 households in New York. In summation, having leaders that publicly illuminate the often hidden issue of hunger and that are willing to implement corrective policy on a state level to address flawed federal policy are ways in which New York State is immensely "getting it right."

On behalf of Long Island Cares, Inc.—The Harry Chapin Food Bank, the State appointed regional food bank for Long Island, the partnership we share with the State is vital to our overall operation. New York State entrusts Long Island Cares as the administrator of the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) for the Long Island region. **HPNAP funding helped Long Island Cares to distribute the following during the 2013-2014 contract year: 16,864,991 total meals, $106,000 of fresh produce, $43,000 of one-percent or fat-free fluid milk, and $160,000 in operations and capital equipment support which includes refrigeration, racking, and staffing costs for our member agencies.** The flexibility, strength, and ability to purchase perishables and other more expensive items that HPNAP affords Long Island Cares gives so much more to the region than simply increased poundage. It leads to increased access to high cost, low sodium, low fat, high proteins that Long Islanders in need have difficulty procuring for themselves. HPNAP doesn't simply purchase food; it helps New Yorkers in need access the "right foods."

Under the leadership of the Honorable Andrew Cuomo and a responsive Long Island delegation of Assembly Members and Senators, we find ourselves in the most opportune political climate to make systematic and sustainable food policy changes. There must be a renewed commitment towards feeding the hungry in New York State that embraces enhanced funding, access to resources, aggressive community outreach and education by which no child, adult, senior citizen, or person in need is ever left out. Our founder Harry Chapin once said, *"To know is to care. To care is to act. To act is to make a difference."* It is on us now, the people in this room, to come together to advance food policy that promotes nutrition awareness, generates local economic development, and buttresses public health for generations to come. Trust that you have the support and partnership of the regional food bank for Long Island, Long Island Cares, in this worthy endeavor.

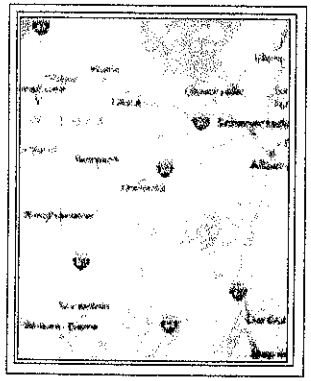
Cattle Raised and Processed in New York State

Never crowded, the cattle are raised on a blend of grass and grains

In NY State, ground beef from dairy cows is one of the only farm to school products available all year round.

WHAT IS A Market COW?

These are cows from NY State dairy herds. Cows are bred for milk and meat. Between 15-25% of each herd is used for ground beef as the cattle's milk production declines. The cattle we use for Slope Farm to School *are never processed due to illness or injury.* This is attested to by the UDSA inspector at the processor, and by *an affidavit on each animal* supplied by the farmer.



About Ken Jaffe

Ken has owned and operated Slope Farms in Meredith, NY For 10 years, mostly producing grass fed beef for NYC restaurants and butcher shops. Ken previously practiced medicine for 25 years, and studied public health at Columbia. He has written and lectured on the risks of human health from overuse of antibiotics in livestock. These concerns lead him to work on improving the quality and safety of beef used in schools. Ken worked with the NYC SchoolFood program to develop sustainable beef standards, and on a pilot program providing grass fed ground beef in NYC schools. For the past 18 months Ken has partnered with Julia Van Loon in developing and promoting sustainable beef standards for North Shore School District and has been providing fresh beef for their school food program.

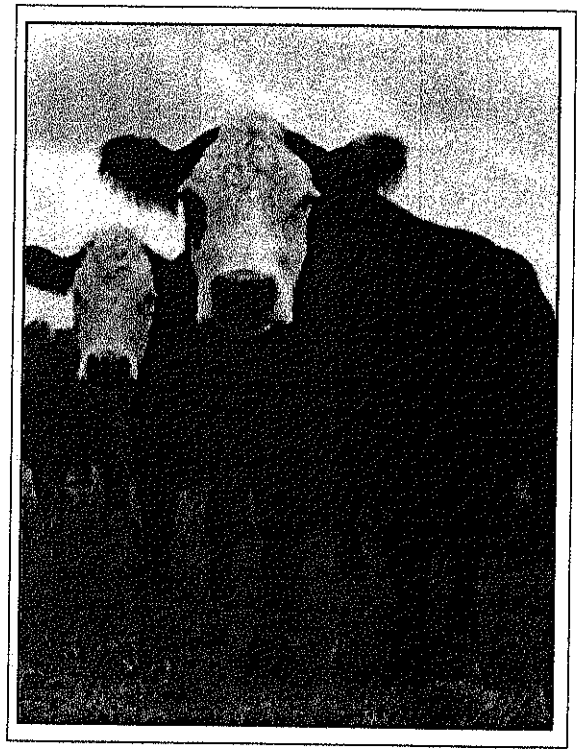
About Julia Van Loon

Julia is a School Food Reform Advocate and Consultant with over thirty-five years in the hospitality industry. Since 2008, Julia has been working with school communities to enhance foodservice programs through culinary and nutrition best practices. Julia partners with Ken/ Slope Farms to provide and promote local and sustainable NYS beef to schools in the metropolitan region.

CONTACT: JULIA VAN LOON
Phone: 917-301-5562

SLOPE FARM

TO SCHOOL



LOCAL & SUSTAINABLE

NEW YORK STATE BEEF

Sustainably and Humanely Raised

No Antibiotics or Hormones

Feed Grown and Harvested Locally

In NY State, ground beef from dairy cows is one of the only farm to school products available all year round.

WHY LOCAL BEEF?

We have a right to know where our beef is from. We have the right to demand that we can easily trace the origin of our beef directly back to the farm where a cow is raised. We prefer the smaller carbon footprint that comes with local beef's shorter trucking distances.

WHY SUSTAINABLE BEEF?

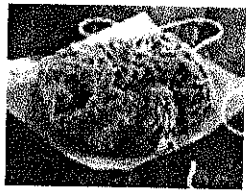
Raised without routine doses of antibiotics or hormones, our beef is processed from only the muscle and overlying fat of individual cattle. Typical ground beef and hamburgers, made in large processing plants, is sourced from thousands of cows raised under the harshest conditions. Routine doses of antibiotics and hormones are the norm. Feedlots are big business and the animal is rarely treated with the humanity it deserves. To raise a cow sustainably, is to impart humane practices at ever turn. Never crowded, the cattle are raised on a blend of grass and grains. The cows that go on to be processed have never been sick nor hurt - the absence of stress creates a healthier and tastier beef.

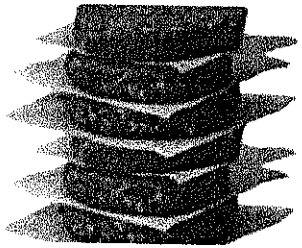
Local, NYS Sustainable Beef for Schools

SLOPE FARM TO SCHOOL is the solution for the many devoted foodservice directors, administrators and parents who often wonder how to extend the Farm-to-School experience they've all enjoyed with produce and dairy products to the beef served in schools. Moreover, how can we offer children a sustainable beef product and have it be cost effective.

SLOPE FARM TO SCHOOL is a partnership between Ken and Linda Jaffe, owners of Slope Farms and a consortium of dairy farmers located in Delaware County, New York. The beef for the program is processed from cull cows that have never been administered routine antibiotics or hormones and have never been slaughtered due to illness or injury. Unlike the beef from feedlots out west, the cows are always humanely treated as facilities are small and personal and always under the watchful eye of USDA inspectors at every turn.

SLOPE FARM TO SCHOOL has been the local and sustainable beef of choice for a school district on Long Island since 2012. The reviews never fail to excite both farmer, cooks and superintendents!





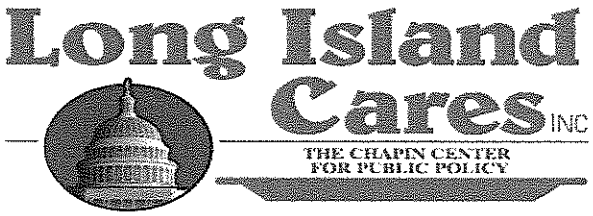
The beef for the **Slope Farm to School** is processed from market cows that have never been administered routine antibiotics or hormones and have never been slaughtered due to illness or injury.

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

- Sustainably and Humanely Raised
- No Antibiotics or Hormones
- Feed Grown and Harvested Locally
- 80:20% Fat Ratio
- Delivered Fresh or Frozen
- Three-Ounce Patties Ready for Oven or Grill
- Five Pound Packages of Ground Beef
- Cattle raised and Processed in NY State
- No Fillers/100% Pure NYS Beef
- Affidavit on each cow attesting to raising practices.

MARKET DAIRY COW FAQS

- Market dairy cows represent an important part of the total U.S. beef supply. NY State dairy farmers currently supply about 100,000 market cows yearly. Most of these cattle are currently going to industrial slaughterhouses in Pennsylvania.
- In NY State, ground beef from dairy cows is one of the only farm to school products available all year round.
- There is potentially enough beef from NY dairy cows to produce enough antibiotic/hormone-free beef for all of New York State's school's.



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Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
of Suffolk County

Strengthening Families & Communities
Protecting & Enhancing the Environment
Fostering Economic Development
Promoting Sustainable Agriculture

NYSCFP 9-30-14 Listening Session Comments
Zahrine Bajwa, PhD zb12@cornell.edu

Good Morning Council Members,
Thank you for the opportunity to share how Cornell Cooperative Extension will contribute and can definitely make an impact on participants making healthier food their choice in an effort to prevent obesity and *food related* chronic diseases.

The Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA). Sec 241-transformed SNAP-Ed into a **Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Program**, thus adopting obesity prevention as a major emphasis and embracing comprehensive *community – based* and *public health* approaches. This is an exiting time for NYS as we embark on this new challenge.

Approximately 25% of adults in NYS are obese and another 36% are overweight. Rates of obesity are higher among adults who are non-Hispanic Black, earn an annual household income less than $25,000, have less than a college education, and/or currently living with a disability. In addition, the rate of childhood obesity remains at epidemic proportions in New York State. However, the burden of childhood obesity is not distributed equally across the population. In New York State, data collected from public school districts through the NYS Student Weight Status Category Reporting System (SWSCR) illustrate rates of obesity are significantly higher in school districts in which a higher proportion of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

As professionals in the field of health and nutrition, we frequently hear objections to work involving policy. "We should just educate people". The trouble with education-only efforts is they take place in a vacuum. Without the neighborhood/ community, school, and family support, education goes no further than the classroom. Support could include sidewalks, designated walking or safe walking routes to school, bike racks, physical activity and playtime during school hours. Such neighborhood and school efforts require policy for example each child will have 20 minutes of recess each day, environmental such as sidewalk markers designating routes to school, and systems such as an emphasis on promoting physical activity for children from before school to after to reinforce educational messages.

Meanwhile, children are taught to "eat healthy" while in some schools candy is used to illustrate math problems. Substituting non-food items (or dried beans) in math can be a *policy change* by the school principal as part of an overall *systems change* of encouraging healthy eating. It's a way of practicing "do as I say AND as I do."

Adults are bombarded with health claims from the specious to the well-researched, but two health ideas that are almost universally accepted are (1) Get physically active, and (2) Eat fruits

and vegetables. Again we know that various modes of education get the message out, but how well does the person's environment support these ideas? Does the workplace have vending machines that healthy choices? Do the town's streets have bicycle lanes?

Policy, environmental, and systems changes are designed to make the healthy choice the easy choice. Our modern society wasn't engineered with health in mind, and our collective health is paying the price.

Many health education programs have been moving toward policy, systems, and environmental change approaches. These approaches compliment and fill a critical gap. We are now positioned to see the SNAP-Ed program use this approach by collaborating with partners to make them happen.

FINDING A COMMON GROUND – The Social-Ecological Model as described in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines, illustrates how all elements of society combine to shape an individual's food and physical activity choices, and ultimately one's calorie balance and chronic disease risk.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in NYS will use comprehensive, multi-level interventions at multiple complementary organizational and institutional levels. These approaches address several or all elements or levels of the socio-ecological model and may target the individual, the interpersonal level such as family, friends, etc., organizational level such as workplace, school, etc., community level such as food retailers, food deserts, etc., and public policy or societal level such as local laws, social norms, etc.

Policy, System and Environmental Strategies

The focus is changes in the settings or venues in low-income areas where nutrition education is provided. These changes may include the adoption and implementation of a new or enhanced organizational practice, rule or procedure that makes healthy choices easier and more desirable. Ideally, changes at the environmental level would contribute to long-term outcomes at the individual level of the framework.

Schools and communities play a large role in promoting or inhibiting healthy behaviors. Policy, system and environmental strategies are activities that support sustained behavior change by promoting and instituting policies that address barriers which make healthy food and physical activity choices harder for low-income youth. Preferred environmental approaches include policies that impact availability of food and physical activity in low-income schools and/or nutrition and obesity prevention education for key school stakeholders to increase awareness of the need for environmental change and provide them with skills and materials to undertake environmental change efforts themselves.

Some types of environmental activities that we in Suffolk have implemented include: collaborating with some school districts food service staff on joint nutrition education efforts such as: promoting healthy menu items, improving school meals, coordinating with school wellness committee on school policies related to healthy eating for students and parents; starting a school garden, apply for a farm-to-school program; promoting local fruits and vegetables, through Farmers Markets expanding the celebration of Food Day, collaborating with Suffolk Food Policy Council, piloting the Healthy Corner Store Project; and of course, we are excited to plan a youth social marketing program to change norms around the food environment and healthy eating. We invite others to join with us to so that we are successful in bringing meaningful in our environment. ***Thank you for your time***

NYS Council on Food Policy Listening Session, 9/30/14

Comments:

1.) I represent Dock to Dish, which is headquartered in Montauk and is the original and only "genuine Community Supported Fishery" in New York State that has pioneered the first Restaurant Supported Fishery in the United States.

2.) The supply side of our cooperative consists exclusively of forty-two licensed New York State commercial fishermen and shellfish harvesters.

3.) We source 100% of our seafood from local New York State waters, land 100% of our hauls in New York State ports of Montauk and Shinnecock, and distribute safe, healthy, local seafood to over one hundred families in five local Suffolk County communities, as well as one dozen sustainable seafood restaurants in New York City.

4.) We receive zero (0) support what-so-ever from any government office.

Question:

Why is the Governor's Office ignoring New York State Fisheries, fishermen and Suffolk County communities that are seeking safe, healthful, local seafood?

Island Harvest
A FOOD BANK FOR LONG ISLAND
Fighting Hunger. Touching Lives.

NYS Food Policy Council Listening Session
September 30, 2014

Hello, my name is Allison Puglia and I am the VP of Program and Agency relations at Island Harvest Food Bank. Thank you for giving us an opportunity to speak with you on behalf of more than 316,000 Long Islanders who depend on the important services we provide each year. Our experience includes 22 years of procuring, transporting, and delivering the equivalent of about 11 million meals annually, and services such as multi-tiered education initiatives, Mobile Food Programs for children, seniors, people with disabilities and veterans. We also provide food safety training; mobilization of a wide array of private and non-profit partners in support of our hunger-relief work, advocacy support with a network of faith based congregations, job training and a large volunteer network – encompassing close to 5,000 children, adults and people in transition and of course – our robust SNAP Outreach and Enrollment Services.

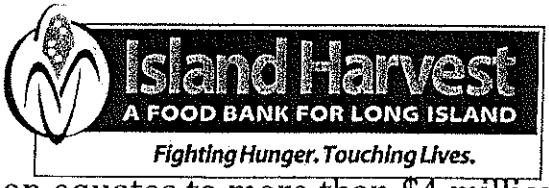
Allow me to tell you about Anne, a senior who we supported through our Operation: HOPE Program and is living on a fixed income. She comes from a family dedicated to serving our country, including her father, brother, husband, and grandson. At a recent visit to her home she shared that she struggles at the end of each month to purchase the foods she needs. She prioritizes all of her bills and limits her driving to appointments twice per week to save money. As a result of the recent changes to SNAP, *her benefits were cut off*, which has led to some mild depression that she now is being treated for. Anne knows how much her family cares about her, but she

doesn't want to rely on them to put food on the table – she wants to remain independent and self-sufficient for as long as possible.

In August, Feeding America released Hunger in America 2014, a study of hunger with support from member food banks from across the country. This report detailed that only 43% of the people visiting food assistance programs are receiving SNAP benefits thus highlighting the *under* usage of SNAP benefits to those in need on Long Island. Although access to SNAP benefits has increased by 14% in the past four years, there are still more than 14,000 people on Long Island who are eligible and have not applied – we believe this number is very low and far underrepresents the true number of people eligible here on LI.

Island Harvest's robust SNAP Outreach and Enrollment Services Program is focused on working with our partner organizations, such as the Health and Welfare Council, AARP, Catholic Charities and more to educate the community about SNAP and offer easy access to enrollment. And, in order to extend the reach of a single staff person managing this program, trained volunteers are utilized to stretch over 75 Long Island sites which has led to more than 700 SNAP applications completed to date in 2014. I am proud to report that we are on target to reach our goals of assisting 1000 families this year.

It is important to highlight that the impact of SNAP benefits is not solely for the family, but also the community. The local economic impact generated as a direct result of the SNAP applications that Island Harvest has been able to



assist toward completion equates to more than $4 million for the LI economy in this year alone!!

The education component of the SNAP Outreach Program is essential in helping ward off the stigma, fears, and rumors many falsely have come to believe. The Hunger in America Report asked clients of emergency food programs across the country and 31% responded that they believed they wouldn't be eligible or don't even know about the program.

There is no doubt that there is a direct link between proper nutrition and good health. Food Insecurity for Long Islanders prevents them from eating the right foods, 67% choosing between paying rent, buying medication, or paying for transportation to get to work.

We are proud to have implemented many new programs under the banner of Healthy Food Initiatives. Led by a certified nutritionist and supported by interns for colleges on LI and beyond – we are branching out to offer nutrition education programs, cooking demonstrations, recipe books and more – all designed to help people in need to learn how to make wise, healthy decisions about nutrition, cooking and food choices. We have been working with members of the LI Farm Bureau for nearly a decade to ensure that farm fresh fruits and vegetables, grown on LI are available to our constituents.

We have partnered with farmers, Cornell Cooperative and other important organizations to provide training, education and information through our Healthy Foods Initiative.

Even with SNAP benefits people struggle to feed their families. The Study also reports that close to 50% of the respondents indicated that SNAP benefits get them only through the first half of the month. This forces our neighbors to turn to emergency food assistance programs. Island Harvest supports over 400 emergency food programs on Long Island and over 150 other feeding programs.

Island Harvest has been able to grow to become the largest hunger-relief organization on LI without a dependence on government support – at the local, state or federal level. We maintain a highly rated cost to income ratio whereby close to 97 cents of every dollar raised support our food distribution, education and other direct service programs. We depend heavily on partnerships from the community, corporations, foundations and individuals to align with us through their gifts of funds and in-kind donations and support.

But we are concerned, with more and more Long Islanders struggling to meet even the most important and yet basic needs (food and human services) - government support is decreasing. This is creating a vortex at the local level where people have been forced to "fend for themselves". Those most vulnerable need access to food, mental health and other services, yet these are the programs that are first to be cut from the local and state government support. We are at a breaking point, and LI'ers are the ones suffering. We

need increased funding not cuts to programs like SNAP to support the growing needs of LI'ers.

It is our hope that you and your colleagues will continue to fight for increased funding for programs like healthy foods initiatives, benefits support, the availability of farm fresh foods that support the most vulnerable in our communities who are all too often the victims of the continuing effects of a severe national recession.

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Remarks for New York State Council on Food Policy Listening Tour
September 30, 2014

Introduction

- Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.
- My name is Erin Thoresen. I am the Director of Programs at Sustainable Long Island.
- Sustainable Long Island is a **regional non-profit organization** whose **mission** is to **promote economic development**, **environmental health**, and **social equity** for all Long Islanders. Since 1998 we have been a **catalyst and facilitator** for sustainable development, **cultivating the conditions**, **identifying resources**, and **providing tools** to advance sustainability across Long Island. We facilitate community planning processes to identify shared values, visions for the future, and action steps to implement those plans, working with a network of community partners to carry out projects and foster community revitalization.

- Sustainable Long Island has become a trusted leader across the region in the area of food equity and we are committed to helping improve food access across Long Island through our various Food Equity programs.
    - Our community partners now operate **seven youth-staffed farmers markets** which have employed **dozens of high school students** providing them with in-depth training on topics such as nutrition education, cash handling, and marketing and promotion, and exposing them to larger elements of the food system. Simultaneously, the markets have provided tens of thousands of pounds of locally grown produce to thousands of food insecure Long Islanders, and helped stimulate the local farm economy.
    - With the help of volunteers and other community groups, we've installed **4 community gardens** in different food insecure areas of Long Island.
        - Freeport: Cedarmore Corporation's "Seed to Table" Community Garden
        - Long Beach: Magnolia Senior Center Community Garden
        - Long Beach: Sherman Brown Community Garden
        - Roosevelt: Roosevelt Middle School "Pop-Up" Garden
    - Sustainable Long Island has also headed up several research projects related to food system data, policy and codes:
        - Last year, in **partnership with Adelphi University**, we also published the **Long Island Food System Report Card**, providing a comprehensive evaluation of Long Island's food system.

- We also **conducted research on local policies and codes pertaining to the LI food system** and **commissioned a food retail leakage analysis** to quantify how well food retail markets are meeting demand for food and food-service industries.

- Sustainable Long Island, as you are likely already aware, is also a member of the **Suffolk County Food Policy Council**, and we participate in the Long Island Community Gardens Association, and Anti-Hunger Taskforce of Long Island, and are piloting a Healthy Corner Stores Project with the Food Equity subcommittee of the Suffolk Food Policy Council, including Island Harvest, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, and the Suffolk County Office of Minority Health.

New York State Leadership

- New York State has taken a leadership role in the food realm and we strongly support continued funding and policy support for the following successful initiatives that aim to improve food access for low-income and food-insecure people.

- For instance, the **NY Healthy Food Healthy Communities Fund** (HFHC fund) assists for-profit, nonprofit and cooperative food markets located in underserved areas of New York by financing development projects to improve food retail stores

  - The $30 million fund, administered by the Low Income Investment Fund, the Food Trust, and The Reinvestment Fund, has enabled owners to do everything from open a full-service grocery in communities that do not have one, to expand and renovate existing stores in low-income areas.
  - There are currently 8 projects funded through this program in New York: Syracuse, Staten Island, Highland Falls, Buffalo, Mount Vernon, Brooklyn, and Red Creek.
  - As you can see, the program has not been utilized on Long Island. We recommend the state do more to market the program, increase outreach, and work more closely with local and regional organizations to increase utilization in Nassau and Suffolk, which would go a long way toward helping underserved communities meet the demand for healthy, fresh food.

- Other successful examples are incentive programs like **New York City's Health Bucks** and the **NYS Fresh Connect** program

  - Health Bucks, started in 2005, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is an EBT incentive program that provides EBT customers with a $2 coupon for every $5 of EBT qualifying purchases.

- As of 2011, the program had a 93% coupon redemption rate, with $260,000 in Health Bucks distributed across markets in 2013. All farmers' markets in NYC currently accept Health Bucks.
- While there have been some benefits through **Fresh Connect** here on Long Island, we would like to see these types of programs expanded, so that more people are able to afford healthy, local produce.

As the NYS Council on Food Policy, you have identified four key issue areas including:

- Strengthening the connection between local food products and consumers
- Supporting efficient and profitable agricultural food production and food retail infrastructure
- Fostering a culture of healthy and local eating for all NY State residents
- Maximizing participation in food and nutrition assistance programs

Based on our experience on Long Island, we offer the following suggested improvements:

- **One method to help "maximize participation in food and nutrition assistance programs" across the state would be to <u>establish a statewide EBT incentive program.</u>**

EBT incentives

- According to the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, as of June this year (2014), **3,094,747 persons** across NYS were enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, with **128,363 persons in Suffolk County** ($17,614,711 SNAP dollars spent) and **41,560 persons in Nassau County** ($9,142,530 SNAP dollars spent).
  - However, very few of those SNAP benefits are used at farmers' markets. While the monetary value of redemptions at farmers' markets has increased in recent year, SNAP redemptions at markets as a percentage of total SNAP redemptions remains very low: in fact, according to the USDA, in 2012 SNAP redemptions at farmers' markets across the country represented **only 0.02% of total SNAP redemptions.**
- EBT incentive programs, like NYC's Health Bucks, help improve access of fresh, healthy foods to low income individuals while simultaneously supporting the local economy and local farmers. According to the USDA, every $1 in new SNAP benefits spent can result in up to $1.80 in total economic activity.
- Some examples of successful EBT incentive programs in other states include:
  - Michigan's "Double Up Bucks" Program, which provides SNAP participants with $20 for every $20 worth of locally grown fruits and vegetables purchased using EBT card. Some key statistics include:

    - Over 1,000 farmers' participated in program last year
    - Over 200,000 participating customer visits to enrolled sites
    - Over 10,000 new SNAP customers visited FM in 2013
    - Although Michigan has less than 4% of the nation's SNAP participants, the program has allowed for SNAP sales to reach $1.7 million (one of the top five in the nation)
  - Boston's "Bounty Bucks" Program, which matches dollar-for-dollar on qualifying SNAP purchases up to $10.
    - Over five years the program has expanded from 7 to 21 sites, boasting $166,540 in SNAP & Bounty Buck Sales for 2013-2014.

Another key issue area identified by the NYS Council on Food Policy is to "support efficient and profitable agricultural food production and food retail infrastructure."

In order to accomplish these goals, SLI recommends the establishment of a food distribution center that can be located close to the Nassau/Suffolk county line.

- Long Island is a state leader in the farming industry, however, lacks major food distribution centers.
- Currently, most of the produce grown here is shipped to distribution centers like Hunts Point Market in NYC, and then transported back to food retail centers in different Long Island communities. Not only is this costly, but it is also damaging to the environment and contributes to traffic congestion all across the island.
- To better meet local demand, we should be working to encourage new stores or to expand offerings of current stores.
- The Food Retail Leakage Analysis I mentioned earlier, completed in January 2014, demonstrates that in several of the most underserved communities here in Suffolk County, demand for food retail goods and services vastly exceeds supply. A leakage emerges when demand exceeds supply, and typically occurs when consumers purchase goods from outside the community. This is an indication of potential to generate additional economic impact in local communities in terms of capturing revenue, keeping money in these communities, and possibly creating jobs.
  - Our analysis in fact, demonstrates that **demand for all food-related industries within the Flanders, North Bellport, and Wyandanch CDPs vastly exceeds the supply** of such industries, **representing "leakage" of 67%, 77%, and 62% of all such related expenditures respectively in these communities.**

- **Food insecurity is a major issue on Long Island.** According to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap 2013 Study, **7.1% of all Nassau County and 7.3% of all Suffolk County residents are considered food insecure**, while nearly half of all residents in both counties (47% Nassau; 52% Suffolk) live in households with income below 200% of the federal poverty level.[1] Taking these recommendations into consideration will not only increase access to local, quality, affordable produce, but it will stimulate our local economy as well.

Closing Remarks

- Sustainable Long Island encourages you and everyone here to take these issues into consideration and work towards establishing food policies for a more equitable future.
- We **applaud your efforts** at the State level and look forward to continuing to collaborate with you and all of our partners as we work to strengthen LI's food system.
- I sincerely appreciate the NYS Council on Food Policy providing this opportunity to speak on behalf of Sustainable Long Island. Thank you.

[1] In 2013, 200% of the federal poverty level was $22,980 for a household of 1 and $47,100 for a household of 4.

Speaking Points

On behalf of Food Equity Subcommittee of Suffolk County Food Policy Council

To: New York State Council on Food Policy

9/30/14

Introduction

- Good morning. Thank you for inviting the Suffolk County Food Policy Council to speak before you today.
- My name is Erin Thoresen. I am the Director of Programs at Sustainable Long Island and Chair of the Food Equity Subcommittee of the Suffolk County Food Policy Council and I'm speaking now on behalf of that committee, which is comprised of:
    - Sustainable Long Island,
    - Island Harvest,
    - the Suffolk County Office of Minority Health,
    - Suffolk County Department of Social Services,
    - Eastern Suffolk BOCES, and
    - the Health & Welfare Council of Long Island.

Mission

- Our subcommittee was created to identify actionable steps to achieve greater equity within the regional food system and to make recommendations to the entire Food Policy Council as well as the Legislature, and to identify or offer suggestions on legislation or policy to achieve those steps.
- We appreciate the opportunity to speak before the NYS Council on Food Policy and believe that there are meaningful ways the Council can raise awareness with lawmakers, foster critical dialogue and effect change in the field of food equity, access and policy.

Obstacles and Challenges

- As we are all well aware, there are numerous obstacles and challenges facing underserved communities in Suffolk County, including a lack of access to healthy, affordable food choices and, as has been shown in many research reports – most recently Feeding America's 2014 Hunger in America report – the economic downturn and recession have driven up the demand for food assistance.

- The Council can play a critical role in raising awareness among state lawmakers about this increased demand and the need for funding assistance programs in the state budget.
- While a network of resources exist to help people, we know that they're not all being used to the fullest extent.
    - For example, SNAP usage at farmers' markets is very low. Only 0.034% of all SNAP benefits distributed are redeemed at Suffolk County farmers' markets.
    - We also know, based upon a Food Retail Leakage Analysis that SLI had done last year, that in many communities, demand for food retail far outweighs supply. For establishments such as grocery stores, specialty food stores, fruit & vegetable markets, and others, demand for goods exceeds supply.
        - Demand for all food-related industries within the Wyandanch Census Designated Place (CDP) vastly exceeds supply to the tune of approximately $20 million in food-related purchases, or roughly 62% of all such related expenditures.
        - Similarly, demand for all food-related industries within the North Bellport CDP vastly exceeds the supply of such industries. Over $27.4 million in food-related purchases "leaked" from the North Bellport CDP last year. This represents a leakage of approximately 77.0% of all such related expenditures.
    - Education about nutrition, eating well on a limited budget, and preparing healthy foods and recipes is also needed to help people make healthy choices.

We urge the NYS Council on Food Policy to advocate for increased funding for nutrition assistance funding, nutrition education programs and for continuance of the Healthy Food, Healthy Communities program.

Objectives

- As a Subcommittee, we identified four main areas in which to focus our efforts over the course of the coming months and years:
    - Healthy Corner Stores
    - School Food
    - Sampling and demonstrations at farmers' markets to help people make healthier choices
    - Increasing SNAP and EBT redemption/usage at farmers' markets in Suffolk County
- We also set out to **identify incentives to bring healthy food retail options to underserved communities** and to **support or encourage those retailers to maintain**

operations after receiving the initial incentive. In other words, we want to ensure these stores or businesses are there to serve the communities in the long-run.

- Another objective is to **develop guidelines for doing product sampling** or **recipe demonstrations** to get people to try new items, such as at farmers' markets or community gardens events.
    - Tasting and demonstrations are among the best ways to encourage people to try new items.
    - It has been brought to our attention by many of our community partners who run youth-staffed farmers' markets or community gardens that there is confusion about what is and what is not allowed in terms of giving out samples of products and demonstrating recipes and techniques for preparing healthy foods. Furthermore, the variations between government agencies make it more confusing – the regulations differ from County to County, and the local health departments do not regulate farmers' markets.
    - **Clarity and guidance regarding cooking demos and product sampling is necessary to prevent confusion** and overlap between all of these agencies. We urge the NYS Council on Food Policy to establish guidelines that could be used by NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, and local County Health Departments to consistently guide cooking demos and product sampling at Farmers' markets and community gardens.

    - We are also working **to identify alternative models for offering healthy, affordable food choices in underserved communities.**
        - For example, in cases where a farmers' market may not be viable, perhaps a fresh food delivery service or a mobile market may be a better option.
        - And in communities where some limited options for fresh food do exist, our Subcommittee has identified as an objective to work with existing corner stores to develop ways to expand their offerings of healthy, affordable options through education and outreach, connecting with distributors and expanding offerings, signage and labeling, and store infrastructure.

<u>Accomplishments</u>

- So far this year, our Subcommittee has achieved the **following accomplishments**:
    - Shared and distributed lists of farmers' markets in Nassau and Suffolk Counties that accept SNAP/EBT prepared by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk.

- Researched best practices and possible models for healthy corner store project, including studying projects in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Delridge Neighborhood (Seattle), and others.
- Developed and launched pilot of Healthy Corner Stores Project, working with Neighborhood Country Market in Mastic Beach to expand healthy, affordable food options.
    - Identified Neighborhood Country Market as ready and willing partner in underserved neighborhood
    - Surveyed customers and residents about preferences and shopping habits
    - Developed preliminary 6-month action plan for pilot phase
    - Held Kick-Off Event on August 15th to introduce the pilot project to the community and customers, including tasting of yogurt parfaits, coupons for skim and 1% milk, educational materials, free lunches for children under 18, and showcased new fresh produce offerings
- Secured grant funding from private foundation to expand pilot project to work with 3-4 additional stores.

In Closing

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak before you today. We look forward to continuing to work with the other subcommittees and with you all at the NYS Council on Food Policy to strengthen our food system and make it more equitable for all.

September 30, 2014

Iman Marghoob, Chair – Community Gardens

August Ruckdeschel, Chair - "Why Buy Local?"

Erin Thoresen, Chair – Food Equity

Vivian Viloria-Fisher, Chair –Food Education

Suffolk County Food Policy
August Ruckdeschel, Chair

The

The Mission of the Food Policy Council:

- **Promote the production, distribution, and awareness of locally grown food.**
- **Strengthen and prioritize policies that will improve food access, health, and nutrition.**
- **Enhance the regional food system by utilizing local agriculture and farming.**

SCFPC
SUFFOLK COUNTY
Food Policy Council

Food Equity Subcommittee

Suffolk County Food Policy
August Ruckdeschel, Chair

The

September 30, 2014

Erin Thoresen, Sustainable Long Island, Chair

Randi Dresner, Island Harvest

Gregson Piggott, Suffolk County Office of Minority Health

Stephen Kramarcik, Suffolk County Department of Social Services

Colleen Lipponer, Eastern Suffolk BOCES

Gwen O'Shea, Health & Welfare Council of Long Island

Mission Statement

The food equity subcommittee of the Suffolk County Food Policy Council aims to identify actionable steps to achieve greater equity within the regional food system and to make recommendations to the entire Food Policy Council as well as the Legislature, and to identify or offer suggestions on legislation or policy to achieve those steps.

Obstacles

- Lack of access to healthy, affordable food choices in some communities
- Connecting communities with affordable, healthy options (distribution, limited opportunities for retail)
- Low redemption of SNAP/EBT at Farmers' Markets
- Education about healthy options, budgeting, and food preparation
- Funding and resources

Objectives

- Explore programs and projects in four areas: healthy corner stores, school food, sampling and demonstrations at farmers markets and understanding regulations for cooking demos, and increasing SNAP redemption/usage at farmers' markets in Suffolk County.
- Identify incentives (financial or in form of policy or programs) to bring healthy food retailers to underserved communities and encourage or support healthy food retailers to maintain and/or expand after initial support
- Document benefits of recipe demonstrations and sampling to get people to try new items (education) and develop broader understanding of regulations for recipe demonstrations and tastings at farmers' markets
    - Nutrition education through demonstrations
- Identify alternative models for offering healthy, affordable food options in underserved communities
- Pilot program to work with 4-5 corner stores in underserved areas to help them offer more healthy, affordable options through education and outreach, connecting with distributors and expanding offerings, signage and labeling, and store infrastructure

Accomplishments

- Shared and distributed lists of farmers' markets in Nassau and Suffolk Counties that accept SNAP/EBT prepared by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk

- Researched best practices and possible models for healthy corner store project, including studying projects in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Delridge Neighborhood (Seattle), and others
- Developed and launched pilot of Healthy Corner Stores Project, working with Neighborhood Country Market in Mastic Beach to expand healthy, affordable food options
    - Identified Neighborhood Country Market as ready and willing partner in underserved neighborhood
    - Surveyed customers and residents about preferences and shopping habits
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    - Held Kick-Off Event on August 15th to introduce the pilot project to the community and customers, including tasting of yogurt parfaits, coupons for skim and 1% milk, educational materials, free lunches for children under 18, and showcased new fresh produce offerings
- Secured grant funding from private foundation to expand pilot project to work with 3-4 additional stores

September 30, 2014

Community Gardens Subcommittee

Suffolk County Food Policy
August Ruckdeschel, Chair

Iman Marghoob, Chair
Frances Whittelsey
Kara Hahn
Erin Thoresen
Zahrine Bajwa
Bhavani Jaroff

The

Mission Statement

To assist local governments to remove barriers and provide positive assistance to facilitate community gardens in towns. Such gardens can improve nutrition and health, physical activity, community engagement, safety and economic vitality for a neighborhood and its residents.

Obstacles

- Identifying land
- Identify audience
- Water hookup
- Electrical (eventually)
- Liability
- Funding

Objectives

- Identify institutions willing to grow seedlings for gardens
    - Materials provided by "Green Thumb" of Long Island
    - Farmingdale, BOCES, Suffolk County probation/prisons, SOAR (youth probation)
- Create an umbrella network "Green Thumb" to manage all community gardens in Suffolk County and eventually Long Island
- Clearly define benefits of implementing community gardens
    - Nutrition education through cooking demonstrations, food preservation techniques, etc.

Accomplishments

- Created the LICGA (Long Island Community Gardens Association) website, a collaboration between Stony Brook Medicine Dietetic Interns and Sustainable Long Island.
- Initiated first annual meeting of Nassau and Suffolk County gardens at an exploratory session March 2014.
- Created LICGA steering committee undertaking the establishment of a 501c-3
- Planning first annual benefit for LICGA-2014 Veterans' Day LICGA Benefit

Food Policy Work

Creation of Suffolk County Food Bill, resolution 1096-2014, proposed by Legislator Kara Hahn. The bill, which recently passed, introduces nutrition guidelines for food available at Suffolk County recreational facilities, as well as all vending machines.

September 30, 2014

"Why Buy Local?" Subcommittee

Suffolk County Food Policy
August Ruckdeschel, Chair

The

August Ruckdeschel, Chair

Joe Gergela

John King

Paule Pachter

Robert Schaefer

Mission Statement

The "Why Buy Local?" subcommittee of the Suffolk County Food Policy Council serves to promote the production, distribution and accessibility of locally grown food. The subcommittee aims to expand access to quality local food, enhance food security, promote sustainability, and expand economic opportunities for local agricultural producers, processors, and distributors.

Obstacles

- Costs of production
- Development pressures
- Marketing and branding challenges
- Lack of financial assistance geared towards Long Island agriculture
- Lack of young and emerging farmers

Objectives

- Agritourism Visitor's Center
- Work with Agricultural Education subcommittee to establish curriculum at both K-12 & University levels.
- Secure financial assistance needed to help young and emerging farmers, start-up operations, and transitioning farmers.
- Secure funds needed to help farmers implement Best Management Practices through financial assistance and the provision of technical assistance through established agencies such as Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Suffolk County Soil & Water Conservation District.
- Help attract and support "value-added" food start-ups, particularly in the fisheries industries.
- Encourage shellfish aquaculture as both a function of economic development and as a means of cleaning Suffolk County bays and waterbodies.

Accomplishments

- The creation and maintenance of the Suffolk County Food Policy Council Facebook and Twitter accounts.
- The Agriculture Capital Equipment Grant Program has been recommended by the LIREDC to Empire State Development for funding at the $500K or $1m level.
- The fourth annual "Celebrate Grown on Long Island Day' was successfully held at the Suffolk County farm in Yaphank.

- With endorsement and support from the Suffolk County Food Policy Council, the latest round of changes to Chapter 8 of the Suffolk County Administrative Code was passed unanimously (with one abstention) by the Suffolk County legislature and signed into law by County Executive Steve Bellone in 2013. The law is intended to improve the attractiveness of Suffolk County's "Purchase of Development Rights" program and to update the legislation to reflect a changing agricultural climate. The law allows limited agritourism activities and onsite processing on preserved Suffolk County farmland. It also creates the mandate that preserved farmland is used for agricultural purposes, and requires currently fallow land to be cultivated and brought into agricultural production.
- A report summarizing the attitudes of 143 Suffolk County agricultural producers was authored by the Suffolk County Department of Economic Development & Planning and presented to the Food Policy Council.

September 30, 2014

Food Education Subcommittee

Suffolk County Food Policy
August Ruckdeschel, Chair

Vivian Viloria-Fisher, Chair

Caroline Kiang

Zahrine Bajwa

Nancy Padrone

Gigi Turbo Marx

Mission Statement

The education subcommittee of the Suffolk County Food Policy Council seeks to work with Suffolk County educational institutions in developing curricula that helps the community learn to make healthy food choices; understand where food comes from, and grow our own food sustainably.

Obstacles

- Communicating with and organizing the large number of disparate school districts in Suffolk County.
- Incorporating activities in K-12 schools within the challenging Core Standards: teachers have little time for enrichment activities and are learning a new curriculum themselves
- Difficulty in maintaining school gardens over the summer months
- Low interest in agricultural education as a career path
- Funding and resources

Objectives

- Explore programs and projects in nutrition, healthy eating and creating school gardens that are in alignment with State standards.
- Disseminate information illustrating successes in Suffolk County school districts that have implemented healthy eating/healthy lifestyle programs
- Identify resources available to Schools, Colleges and other educational institutions through grants or available educational materials.
- Participate in National, State and Local activities that advance Healthy Foods/Healthy Lifestyles education and gardening/farming education.
- Help develop a pilot program in agricultural education at a secondary or post-secondary school using successful models.

Accomplishments

- Participation in Food Day Apple Crunch