NYS Council on Food Policy - Summer Meeting

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Monday, June 28, 2010
Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building, 163 W. 125th St., Harlem

Public Comment Period

12:30 pm - 1 pm

NAME	Affiliation/Organization
Barbara Baron	American Dairy Association and Dairy Council
Mark Dunlea	Hunger Action Network of New York State
Christine Yu	NYC Food & Fitness Partnership
Kerry Birnbach	NYC Coalition Against Hunger
Ruth Katz	Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture
Javier Lopez	BRONX Food & Sustainability Coalition and the NYC Strategic Alliance for Health

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and Dairy Council

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BARON

June 28, 2010

The New York State Food Policy Council
NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets
10B Airline Drive, Albany, NY 12235

Dear Members of The New York State Food Policy Council:

My name is Barbara Baron and I am Vice President of Nutrition Affairs with American Dairy Association and Dairy Council, which is funded by New York State dairy farmers. As a Registered Dietitian with more than 20 years of professional experience and a mom of two teenage boys, I urge the council to recognize two things: first, the vital role that dairy foods play in the overall health profile of children, and secondly, the vital role that dairy farms play in providing wholesome, local foods to their communities and beyond.

As you well know, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends three daily servings of nutrient-rich, low-fat or fat-free milk, cheese or yogurt for adults and children 9 years of age or older, and 2 daily servings for children ages 2-8.

The Guidelines also recommend increased intake of the Food Groups to Encourage (FGTE) – low-fat or fat-free milk or milk products, fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Consuming foods from these groups helps individuals meet their needs for shortfall nutrients, but most Americans, including children, do not consume the recommended amounts of the FGTE. Without developing these habits early in life, children may be setting themselves up for a lifetime of health consequences.

A recent abstract shows that milk is the leading food source of calcium, phosphorous, vitamin D and potassium in the American diet.[ii] These new findings emphasize the importance of dairy's critical nutritional contribution. Eating dairy as part of a healthy diet demonstrates higher nutrient intake, and better diet quality that has been associated with healthier weights and reduced risk of several diseases and conditions including osteoporosis, high blood pressure and metabolic syndrome. In fact, the eating plan known as Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, or DASH, recommends high intake of fruits, veggies, and low-fat dairy, has been shown to reduce high blood pressure as well as some medications, and comes without the need for extreme sodium reduction. The DASH eating plan has also been proven to be twice as effective among African Americans as Caucasians. [iii] The recent statement on Lactose Intolerance from the National Institutes of Health also recommends dairy first since the inclusion of dairy helps reduce risks of these diseases and conditions.

Sources:

ii http://www.nationaldairycouncil.org/PressandMedia/NewsAlertArchives/Pages/NewScienceFurtherSupportsDairyasMajorNutrientContributortoAmericanDiet.aspx

iii Svetkey, L.P., D. Simons-Morton, W.M. Vollmer, et al. Arch. Intern. Med. 159: 285, 1999

As for the availability of local foods, it's important to recognize that while many people think of local foods as the strawberries, tomatoes and sweet corn they anticipate all year, dairy products are one of the very few foods produced locally each and every day of the year. New York ranks as the third top milk producing state in the nation and is home to more than 5400 dairy farms. Many of the of the dairy foods everyone in this room enjoys – from milk, yogurt and cheese, to items made with dry milk and found outside of the dairy case come from dairy farmers in your own region. Examples of dairy's cutting edge technology as follows:

- Many new and emerging technologies are used to make sure milk is produced in the most sustainable way possible. Dairy farmers employ a wide range of environmentally sound practices ranging from basic manure management programs to high-tech systems that convert cow manure to electricity.

- Larger-scale dairy farms are required to follow detailed manure recycling plans. These plans are continually updated to reflect new technologies. Every farm must abide by clean water laws. Farmers protect the water on and near their farms through a variety of practices to minimize potential runoff from their operations.

- Manure is spread on crop fields according to detailed nutrient management plans. These plans take into account the types of soil on the farm, the terrain of the fields, soil moisture levels, and the amount of nutrients the next crop on that field will need.

- Dairy farmers use water responsibly in their milking parlors and in manure management and storage. For example, wastewater is recycled to flush feed alleys and irrigate fields.

- One benefit of fertilizing the soil with cow manure is to help conserve water. When manure is used as a soil treatment, the water-holding capacity of soil is increased by 20 percent, resulting in reduced groundwater needed to grow crops.

In summary, dairy is a local wholesome food providing a unique package of nutrients that plays a vital role in food and nutrition assistance programs helping reduce the risk of chronic disease and promote better health.

Sincerely,

Barbara Baron

Barbara Baron
Vice President, Nutrition Affairs

DUNLEA

June 28, 2010

Comments of Mark Dunlea, Hunger Action Network of NYS, to the NYS Food Policy Council

1. Need $4 billion more for child nutrition reauthorization

We appreciate the Council's support on this issue. The major challenge is getting enough funding to implement the policy reforms that the Council supports. The proposal by Senator Gillibrand to increase school meal reimbursement alone would cost more than $3 billion annually. We support Gillibrand's requests for a $4 billion annual increase and urge the council to do so as well.

2. The Council should be actively engaged in the effort by OGS and DEC to establish standards for state contracts with respect to food procurement. This is part of the Governor's Executive Order on sustainability. Bob Stern has provided the Council with a list of state laws that already exist allowing for the purchase of local food as part of any bidding process. We need to set clear goals.

3. The Council should weigh in on the pending reauthorization of the federal farm bill. The present bill promotes cheap calories and expensive nutrition, and does little to help New York farmers. Subsidies should be provided for fruits and vegetables. Subsidies should go to small and medium size farmers, not large wealthy corporate agribusiness. It should not increase hunger in third world countries as it presently does. The commodity price program needs to overhauled.

4. The Council recommended establishing the Food Policy Council in statue, since the present Executive Order will expire after this administration. If someone in the Governor's office is blocking this recommendation, the Council should ask for a meeting with the Governor. We amended the pending food policy council legislation to grandfather it after five years. The creation of an advisory council is essential to injecting energy and vision into the Council's work. A7528 A / S6893 A.

YU

Comments to the New York State Council on Food Policy
Christine Yu, Director, NYC Food & Fitness Partnership
June 28, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Christine Yu and I am the Director of the NYC Food & Fitness Partnership. I would like to thank the Council for this opportunity to introduce the NYC Food & Fitness Partnership and our efforts to transform the food environments in our communities here in New York City to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to safe, affordable, fresh and nutritious foods.

As you know, the rates of diet-related diseases such as obesity and diabetes have exploded, particularly among children and in at-risk, low-income communities and communities of color. There are nearly twice as many overweight children and almost three times as many overweight adolescents today as there were in 1980.

Research increasingly shows that the foods we eat and the neighborhoods we live in have a dramatic impact on personal and family health. Unfortunately, nearly one million New Yorkers live in "food deserts" – meaning neighborhoods where junk food is plentiful but nutritious, high-quality, affordable food is hard to find. Additionally, opportunities for physical activity have been designed out of the places we live, learn, work and play: from the elimination of PE classes in schools to the lack of sidewalks and safe parks in our neighborhoods to transportation policies that favor cars over people. As a result, individuals and families are forced to turn to less healthy options and our environment makes it inconvenient to be active. The result has been staggering growth in diet-related diseases.

- Diabetes rates in the city increased by 250 percent between 1997 and 2007[1];
- Poor people are more than three times as likely as those in the upper-middle class to suffer from these types of chronic illnesses[2]; and
- Deaths related to diabetes are 3.3 times higher in low-income neighborhoods than in wealthier neighborhoods[3].

Such chronic illnesses comprise millions of lives, strain the economy and health care system and fuel inequities by disproportionately impacting low-income communities and communities of color.

In New York City and across the country, people are realizing that the time has come to reform our food system and the way we eat. The NYC Food & Fitness Partnership emerged from the urgent need to address the increasing burdens of obesity and obesity-related diseases in our most vulnerable communities, particularly among children.

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[1] September 2007 report by The City University of New York Campaign Against Diabetes.
[2] April 2009 report from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Commission to Build a Healthier America
[3] April 2008 study from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

The NYC Food and Fitness Partnership is an alliance whose mission is to engage communities in creating equitable access to healthy, quality affordable foods and opportunities for active living, starting in neighborhoods of highest need. More importantly, we are working to ensure that citizens have a voice in shaping the policies that affect them and their community. The Partnership is brought together by three organizations – City Harvest, Brooklyn Rescue Mission and Transportation Alternatives – and is one of nine community collaboratives supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Food & Community program. Our efforts are focused in Central Brooklyn.

At the end of 2009, the Partnership completed a two and a half year planning process that engaged community organizations and residents to develop a comprehensive and long-term plan for making changes to food and activity environments in their communities. They created a vision for their communities – not only healthier communities but safer ones with reinvigorated local economies, decreased health disparities, increased equity and stronger ties among residents.

From this process, three priorities emerged. These priorities are directly aligned with the NYS Council on Food Policy's key issues areas, specifically around strengthening the connection between local food products and consumers

First, we are focused on **increasing access to healthy food in communities**. Specifically, we are working to:

- Increase the number of healthy retail outlets in our target community such as farmers markets, green carts, coops and through implementation of the City's FRESH initiative;
- Increase regional food procurement by retail outlets in our target community;
- Support and protect community gardens and urban farms which are vital community assets in terms of food security, environment, and health; and
- Improve safety in areas surrounding healthy retail outlets to make it safe for people to actually go out and buy local food from their farmers markets or other healthy retail outlets.

Second, we are working to **improve school food environments** by building the capacity of parents to advocate for school food reform. Our goals are to:

- Advocate for strong and robust reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act in partnership with the NYC Alliance for CNR;
- Position New York City for the infrastructure needed to bring regional food into schools; and
- Support school-based food security initiatives such as securing space and availability for school gardens.

Third, we are focused on increasing opportunities for active living. While outside of the Council for Food Policy's scope, we are working to increase opportunities and infrastructure for safe and accessible walking and biking and increased safety and access to open space.

Within each of these areas, we are addressing citywide policies and expanding successful initiatives, through the work of our partners, to change the systems that shape our food and physical activity environments – systems such as transportation, land use, zoning, food, health, and education.

The issues and challenges before us are so entrenched and complicated. In order to truly transform the landscape in our communities and to ensure access to affordable and healthy

food for all New Yorkers, we need to go beyond just education and awareness raising efforts. We need to support innovative policies that address the design of our environments and the root causes of unequal access to good food. Additionally, it is imperative to bring community members and youth to the table as active partners in the process of determining the vision for their communities. Only then can we truly begin to **ensure the availability of safe, fresh, nutritious and affordable food for all New Yorkers**. We look to the Council to articulate a holistic approach to food systems in New York State and to serve as the collective voice in these efforts.

The NYC Food & Fitness Partnership commends the Council on its work. We would be honored to contribute in any way we can to the efforts of the New York State Council on Food Policy.

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BIRNBACH

Testimony of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger
before the New York State Council on Food Policy
June 28, 2010

Hunger and food insecurity continue to be grave problems throughout urban, rural, and even suburban, New York State. In just New York City, 1.4 million people – one in six city residents – live in households that are food insecure, meaning they cannot afford an adequate and consistent supply of food. Even more distressing is that 400,000 children, more than one out of every five children in the City, live in homes that cannot afford enough food.

The economic and physical barriers to affordable food have contributed to sharp citywide increases in hunger, obesity and diabetes. From 2002-2004, some 173,500 adult New Yorkers became obese and more than 73,000 were diagnosed with diabetes, according to a new study from the Health Department. In the April 2008 issue of *Preventing Chronic Disease*, a report estimated that the citywide weight gain totaled more than 10 million pounds in just two years while deaths from diabetes skyrocketed by 71% between 1990 and 2003. African-American diabetics died at three times the rate of white New Yorkers with the disease, and Hispanic New Yorkers saw a 169% increase in deaths from diabetes

Low-income neighborhoods in New York City, like the rest of the State and nation, often lack access to supermarkets, farmers markets, and other sources of affordable, nutritious food. These communities often jointly suffer from both a lack of access to affordable, community-based food and unemployment.

The food security concerns of New York City's low-income communities embody only one aspect of the fundamentally broken American food system. A handful of companies, "too big to fail", control ever-increasing shares of the food supply. The US is seeing the accelerating consolidation and corporate control of the entities that grow, process, transport, and sell our foods. In 1990, 72% of all U.S. beef was packed by the top four firms; by 2003, it was 84%. Between 1982 and 2004, the amount of flour milled by the top four companies rose from 40 to 63%. Farmers are paid less and less for their products and companies make decisions about food without local input.[i]

To reduce hunger, increase food security and improve overall health throughout the state this Council should make the following recommendations to the Governor:

1) **Reduce barriers to accessing SNAP benefits.**
2) **Support Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens.**
3) **Increase Access to and Participation in School Meals and Summer Meals.**
4) **Fund Pilot Programs to Bring Fresh Produce into Underserved Communities.**
5) **Simplify the Application Process for Government Benefits Programs.**
6) **Launch a Statewide Program to Create Food-Related Jobs.**

1) Reduce Barriers to Accessing SNAP Benefits. Participation in SNAP increased 22% between 2008 and 2009. Without the $2.6 billion in federal SNAP money in New York City, many New Yorkers would struggle to afford food. Not only does SNAP money help millions of low-income New Yorkers, it also brings needed spending into the state economy. Unfortunately, SNAP benefits are still underutilized. Only 57% of the state's residents who are eligible for Federal SNAP benefits apply for and receive them.

- **Eliminate finger imaging.** New York City is the only place in the state that still requires finger imaging (finger printing) before an eligible individual can receive food stamps. Not only does this policy cost the city $800,000 per year and fail to reduce fraud in any meaningful way, it also discourages thousands of eligible people for applying for benefits. Many people misunderstand the finger imaging requirement, or cannot take off of work to visit the Human Resources Administration. This unnecessary and costly bureaucratic step keeps hungry families from receiving benefits they are legally entitled to, and prevents millions in federal dollars from entering the city and state economy.

- **Provide the promised opportunity for food stamps outreach nonprofit to obtain state matching funds.** Over two years ago, NYS OTDA promised that it would issue a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) to determine which nonprofit organizations would obtain federal matching funds for food stamps outreach, but it has yet to do so. Federal funding for outreach will increase SNAP participation and bring hundreds of millions of federal benefits dollars into the State. OTDA should issue such an RFP immediately.

2) Support Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens. At the State level, funding for emergency food providers comes from the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP).

- **Increase HPNAP funding to pantries and kitchens.** The state should increase funding for HPNAP from the current level of around $31 million. To ensure that all New Yorkers not only have enough food, but also adequate nutrition, the state must give more money to support emergency food providers. A reasonable funding level would not only make up for past cuts but would enable pantries and kitchens to meet the rising demand for food. Pantries and kitchens should also be better equipped to sign eligible individuals up for benefits programs which represent a more permanent solution to hunger.

3) Increase Access to and Participation in School Meals and Summer Meals. The State is lagging when it comes to participation in child nutrition programs. According to the Food Research and Action Center, for every 100 students who eat the free or reduced price school lunch, only 38 students eat school breakfast, making New York the 40th worst state in terms of the breakfast to lunch ratio. Many students start classes for the day without a good meal. These students may have trouble staying awake and completing their schoolwork. Hungry students can't live up to their full potential.

- **Increase participation in school breakfasts.** The State should encourage more school districts to offer universal free breakfast in the classroom. Too many students that qualify for free breakfast do not eat it, either because of the stigma associated with it or because they arrive at school too late to eat.

- **Encourage greater participation in WIC by doing outreach, funding non-profits that perform outreach and simplifying applications.** Nationally, only about 57% of eligible children and women participate in the WIC Program. There is strong evidence that New York State's participation rate is even lower.

- **Increase participation in the federal After-School Snacks and Summer Meals.** Benefits for these programs are paid for entirely by the federal government, but they are highly underutilized throughout New York State.

4) Fund Pilot Programs to Bring Fresh Produce into Underserved Communities. There is increasing evidence that food insecurity and obesity are twin roots of the same problem – malnutrition. Leading causes of hunger and obesity in low-income neighborhoods are the lack of money to buy, and the lack of easy access to, high-quality, nutritious food.

- **Implement the proposed incentives for grocery stores, produce stands or farmers' markets to relocate to or remain in low-income neighborhoods.** The State should offer tax or other incentives to bring full grocery stores into low-income neighborhoods.

- **Provide tangible aid to small food stores for improving the nutritional quality of their food.** Many New Yorkers rely on convenience stores to buy food. The State can provide economic incentives for these small stores to offer fresh fruit and vegetables, whole-wheat bread, and low-fat dairy options.

- **Increase the purchase of fresh, nutritious, locally-grown food by State agencies, public schools and universities, and other large government institutions.** The State government should take the lead in offering fresh, affordable food to students and State employees.

5) Simplify the Application Process for Government Benefits Programs. Many eligible individuals do not apply for benefits like SNAP, WIC, Medicaid or TANF. These complimentary programs help to reduce both hunger and poverty and the process to apply should be quick and simple.

- **Investigate the possibility of a multi-program application for all of the major low-income benefits programs.** As long as this application is relatively short and simple, applicants will only need to fill out paperwork once. The information they supply can be forwarded to other relative agencies and families are informed of their eligibility. If eligibility requirements vary widely, agencies can use certain applications as a screening tool or as an initial application for other programs.

6) Launch a Statewide Program to Create Food-Related Jobs. The state should provide limited seed money and technical assistance to support such efforts. This would create jobs in areas that need an economic boost, and would provide healthier options to low-income neighborhoods.

- **The initiative should focus on food businesses that add value.** The State can support processing, freezing and canning operations, and healthy vending and restaurants, which can sustain jobs throughout the year. The State can also provide technical and research assistance to support these local jobs.

- **More detailed suggestions are included in this policy report:** http://www.progressivefix.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/PPI-Policy-Report_BERG-Good-Food-Good-Jobs.pdf

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[i] Mary Hedrickson and William Heffernan, "Concentration of Agricultural Markets," Department of Rural Sociology, University of Missouri, January 2005, http://www.foodcircles.missouri.edu/CRJanuary05.pdf (accessed August 4, 2008).

KATZ

New York State Council on Food Policy
Harlem Meeting, June 28, 2010

Public Comments from
Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture

1. **Re. Beginning Farmers:** In future Recommendations to the Governor, would the Council on Food Policy please take into consideration the need to train new/beginning farmers? In the Dec. 2009 Recommendations, the Council discussed the need to train farmers in direct market - production and marketing, *which is great*, but we also need to acknowledge the fact that we need more farmers. This is a critical issue, as the vast majority of farmers today are at or near retirement age. On the hopeful side, there's a tremendous demand for training by young, second career and other new farmers - including those who did not grow up on a farm. This represents a critical need -- and opportunity, to support new farmer training.

2. **Re. Soil Health:** There's been talk about the need to conserve land for farming, and that the land we have could only feed so many New Yorkers. We need to include in that discussion a fuller exploration of soil health and what a tremendous difference that can mean for yields. For instance, in a Leopold Center article that discussed farmers' experiences with cover crops, one farmer noted that one 300 square foot bed, now yields 450 pounds of carrots where he used to get 100 pounds of carrots, due to his improved agro-ecological management techniques.[1]

3. **Re. Hydrofracking:** There was nothing on this in the Recommendations to the Governor and I have not heard any mention of it today; is anyone discussing the issue of hydrofracking, and how that might impact our water supply -- and therefore our farmers, farms and food supply?

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[1] *Workshop Attracts Big Crowd to Learn About Cover Crops*, Leopold Letter, Vol. 22, No. 1, Spring 2010

LOPEZ

BRONX FOOD AND SUSTAINABILITY COALITION

safh

Strategic Alliance for Health

Comments to the New York State Council on Food Policy
Javier Lopez, Bronx Food and Sustainability Coalition and the NYC Strategic Alliance for Health
June 28, 2010

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about strengthening the connection between local food products and consumers in New York City. Today I am here representing the recently formed Bronx Food and Sustainability Coalition and the NYC Strategic Alliance for Health. Both coalitions aim to address health disparities by advocating for food policy changes that will create new opportunities to access healthy food in underserved communities.

Priorities include but not limited too:

- Increase the number of retail establishments that provide healthy affordable produce
- Increase the number of Community Supported Agriculture programs
- Identify a food distribution network that will allow for local businesses, hospitals, schools, and municipal agencies to have year round access to purchase local produce
- Advocate for new land use polices that protect community gardens and urban farms
- Identify local facilities to grow, process and sell produce

The unequal access to healthy foods in New York City represents a serious threat to those communities who suffer disproportionate rates of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Research shows many of these diseases are preventable with a diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables. Separate studies have also highlighted the importance of having produce that is attractive, accessible and affordable, people will eat them. From an economic perspective making healthy, nutritious food more available to consumers also benefits the producers of those goods. With nutrition awareness and local economic development needs at an all-time high it is time for the city and state to revaluate how to better connect communities to locally grown food products.

The relationship between NYS local produce and NYC underserved communities need to be examined and tested to see if there is a demand for local products. One initiative that is attempting to gauge the interest for local produce in underserved communities is being led by one of GROWNYC's Greenmarket projects, which focuses on reaching out to bodegas in the Bronx and other New York neighborhoods to determine which stores are interested in buying local produce from their Greenmarkets. Creating local produce demand from local businesses (e.g. Bodegas) is one way for underserved communities to be introduced to buying and consuming local produce. When investigating how underserved communities can have new access to local produce we ask the New York State Council on Food Policy to assess the costs of local produce when compared to non-local produce. In underserved communities there is sentiment amongst some business owners and consumers that buying local is not affordable.

The City of New York can make a positive impact on the local produce economy by considering its role as a food source for their thousands municipal employees as well as the millions of residents who pass its buildings on a daily basis. Farmer's Markets, community gardens or urban farms on city properties (vacant lots) and/or near city agencies is one way to improve access to locally grown produce. The City could also consider amending its City Agency Food Standards by including a local produce procurement requirement for all city agencies. Many farmers markets have enjoyed success at local hospitals by selling their produce to patients and employees, however, imagine if these same markets could have the produce vending contract with the hospital's cafeteria.

New York City is a town short on space, but big on needs, which is why we have to thoroughly analyze the cities current land use policies to ensure there are enough opportunities available to enhance the local food economy. There are hundreds if not thousands of unused city owned vacant lots that if appropriately assessed for contaminants could be used for urban farms and community gardens. In addition to the lots why not consider piloting a local farm in a community with the highest rate of chronic disease, NYC public housing residents. NYC Public Housing Authority has so much land at its disposable that each development could have one if not two community gardens or urban farms of their own. We have seen the success of the Brooklyn based Added Value and other urban farms, but in order to expand these types of projects innovative policies and subsidies are needed.

Finally with policy being the central them of so many food coalitions and advocacy groups we ask the New York State Council on Food Policy to collaborate with groups who have taken the time to develop local food policy recommendations. As an example the Design Trust for Public Space, who

recently put together their Five Borough Farm plan to support the expansion of urban agriculture citywide in four key areas:

1. *Survey existing urban agricultural activity and best policy precedents*
2. *Develop metrics to measure its benefits (social, public health, economic, youth empowerment, ecological)*
3. *Inventory City-owned land available for urban agriculture*
4. *Provide technical assistance and advocacy tools*

We have to work together to change state of local food distribution and the local food economy.

The Bronx Food and Sustainability Coalition and the NYC Strategic Alliance for Health applaud the Council on Food Policy on its work. The members of both coalitions would be honored to contribute to the continued dialogue within the New York State Council on Food Policy.

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