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## **Press Release**

### **Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.'s Office Discusses Policy Responses to Hunger and Poverty with Community Action Board at Part of the Solution (POTS)**

Even before the recession, over 19% of Bronx residents lived in households that were unable to afford enough food, a rate that was 50% higher than New York City as a whole. As the poorest Congressional district in the country, Bronx residents also struggle to find affordable housing and living wage jobs in their community.

Despite these obstacles, the Bronx also has a proud history of community engagement and political action. In this tradition, the Community Action Board (CAB), a community-led program jointly supported by Part of the Solution (POTS) and the New York City Coalition Against Hunger (NYCCAH), is working to fight hunger and poverty in Bronx and around the City.

Said Alex Soto, a CAB member at POTS: "I enjoy coming to POTS to meet with other people from the community so that we can speak our minds about all the things that need changing or fixing in our neighborhoods. The next step is to meet with the people in office that can help us get those changes done."

The CAB met with Camilla Pinckney-Price, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Bronx Borough President, Ruben Diaz, Jr., to welcome the new Borough President to the Bronx. The CAB offered several suggestions for how the BP office can take the lead in fighting hunger in the borough, in part by following the lead of other borough presidents (like Manhattan and Brooklyn) who held conferences to highlight the issues of food poverty in their boroughs.

Said Price: “Organizations like POTS have always been important, but they are especially necessary during a bad economy. At a time when Bronxites are struggling to make ends meet, it is good to know they have a place to turn that will help them keep their families fed. I urge all Bronxites to join me in supporting the good work of POTS.”

Said Sr. Mary Alice Hannan, O.P., POTS' Executive Director: "Part of the Solution (POTS) has been providing emergency food, case management and legal services to low-income New Yorkers for the past twenty seven years and we are delighted that Borough President Diaz has demonstrated an interest in the needs of our community so soon in office. Working together, we can improve the lives of thousands of the Bronx's neediest residents"

The main issues the CAB members addressed were: ending finger imaging for SNAP (f.k.a. food stamps) recipients; improving access to SNAP benefits; increasing the number of supermarkets in the Bronx; and supporting affordable housing and living wage job creation in the Bronx.

While CAB members support programs like POTS that provide emergency food services to the community in times of need, they also believe that government can and should take the lead in ending hunger. Based in the POTS Justice Center, the CAB meets every week to discuss the issues they see in their community, to galvanize their community, to develop policy responses, and to lobby their elected officials. Members of the CAB have met with federal and state level elected officials to urge their elected officials to make important policy changes to reduce hunger and poverty in their community.

Said Antonietta Bertucci, Director of the POTS Justice Center: “When it comes to defeating hunger, you have to think about attaching the problem from all sides, holistically. You cannot end hunger by the simple act of feeding people although that is definitely the start. Hunger is linked to poverty - is linked to a lack of job or poor wages - is linked to the inability to pay bills or rent – is linked to homelessness – is linked to a severe lack of housing, specifically housing families can afford – is linked to living a life of constant stress and instability – is linked to illness and other physical reactions a human goes through to cope. We need our representatives to not only see the many strings that bind up each hungry individual but to also work tirelessly to detangle the many knots.”

Said Alexandra Yannias, New York City Coalition Against Hunger: “POTS is a model organization in New York City, but it cannot end hunger alone. It is critical that our representatives meet with their low-income constituents and that our elected officials at all levels take the lead in supporting policies that will help reduce hunger and poverty in the Bronx and in New York City.”

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