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Survey Shows Impact of Hunger Crisis: **No Bailout for the Hungry as Record Number of** **Agencies Don't Have Enough Food**

As the economy continued its precipitous decline in 2008, more New Yorkers were forced to join the lines at food pantries and soup kitchens at the same time as more emergency food programs reported being hit by funding cuts.

In the New York City Coalition Against Hunger's (NYCCA) Annual Hunger Survey, emergency food providers reported serving 28% more people in 2008 than they had in the previous year. In the 2007 Annual Hunger Survey, agencies reported serving 20% more people than they had in 2006.

As a result of the influx of people needing emergency food, 68.8% of emergency food agencies in 2008 – up from 59% in 2007 – reported that they did not have enough food to fulfill demand. The Coalition's full survey report, entitled: *No Bailout for the Hungry: Funding Slashed to Emergency Food Providers as Hunger in NYC Continues to Soar*, is available at www.nyccah.org.

At the same time as agencies reported skyrocketing need for their programs, they experienced budget cuts on the federal, state, and city level. In 2008, 72.3% of responding agencies reported a decrease in government money and food in the past year and 70.8% of responding agencies reported an overall decrease in money and food decreased in the past year.

The situation at Cabrini Immigrant Services on the Lower East Side of Manhattan demonstrated the extent of the increased need for emergency food: Since January 2008, five hundred more people have enrolled in the food pantry program at Cabrini Immigrant Services. Over the past year, Cabrini Immigrant Services reported that the number of overall people needing food had "increased" while the amount of government and private food and money had "greatly decreased."

Said Christina Baal, Director of Immigrant and Family Services at Cabrini Immigrant Services: "More people are unemployed. People are more desperate for food and scared that it will run out. We have people lining up for food two hours before we begin pantry distribution."

Considering the survey results, Joel Berg, Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger commented, "The bad news is that we have more agencies than ever running out of food. The hunger situation which was truly awful in 2007 has now reached crisis proportions. The good news is that the next President and Congress have a great opportunity to rapidly reverse these trends by strengthening the nutrition safety net and creating living wage jobs."

Cabrini Immigrant Services hosted elected officials who discussed the results of the survey and their plans for how government should best respond to the rising tide of hunger.

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) emphasized the importance of NYCCAH's annual survey: "The Coalition's annual hunger survey helps to monitor the extent and identify the causes of hunger in New York City and across the country. I commend the Coalition for their efforts to raise awareness of the hunger epidemic, and for the invaluable information that they offer to those with the ability to affect and direct public policy."

Senator Clinton continued: "Even though the United States is one of the wealthiest and most powerful nations on earth, millions of adults and children in our country do not have reliable access to food. Ending hunger in America is within our reach and reliable monitoring of hunger is vital to public and private food assistance programs and other government initiatives aimed at reducing food insecurity. I have fought hard in Congress on this issue and I will continue that fight to ensure that the basic needs of every American are met."

Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum said, "When the economy suffers, everybody is affected. But the families always hardest hit are those living at or below the poverty line with not a penny to spare when costs skyrocket. They are the ones who rely on city services and other important programs most when times get tough. This survey from the New York Coalition Against Hunger is so important because it confirms what we are starting to see all around us: more people are in need of services, at a time when less money is going into the organizations and programs that provide these services. Joel Berg is exactly right: while Washington is bailing out the banks it's crucial that all levels of government step up to provide the funding needed to operate emergency food programs and help out the hungry now."

Said Councilmember Bill de Blasio, Chair of the General Welfare Committee, "We can't nibble around this problem. Hunger is becoming a full blown crisis for our City, and our current economic downturn is only going to make it harder for thousands of New Yorkers to feed themselves and their families. We can and must do more to get food stamps into the hands of those who qualify. This means identifying potential applicants, removing the finger imaging requirement, and utilizing technology to ease and expedite the application process."

Stated David Weprin, Chair Finance Committee, "As we delve further into these tough economic times, the demand for services has risen. The survey clearly shows how the economy is affecting everyone. It is disheartening to know as the holiday's approach there are families, who are already facing unthinkable decisions, must have another added worry – will they and their children eat. We must work together as a city, both public and private sectors to find temporary and permanent solutions to help those families to ensure that even in tough economic times there will be places that will help to meet their needs."

"New Yorkers in all five boroughs have felt the alarming rise in the cost of food in both their stomachs and wallets," said Councilman Eric Gioia. "Eradicating hunger in New York City is a moral issue. The problem of hunger in New York City is a problem that all New Yorkers should care about- and one that we have the obligation to eliminate."

Said Councilmember Gale A. Brewer, who represents the Upper West Side and Clinton, stated: "A model food program in my Council district, the West Side Campaign Against Hunger, saw a 52 percent increase in October 2008 in the number of households requesting emergency food assistance, as compared to October 2007. The needs of senior households alone rose 38 percent in that same

period and the number of new families seeking services increased by 82 percent. Despite great progress in expanding food stamp registration and food accessibility by Human Resources Administration staff, New York City could save \$800,000 annually by eliminating finger-imaging, freeing up more money for services while also removing a barrier for registration.”

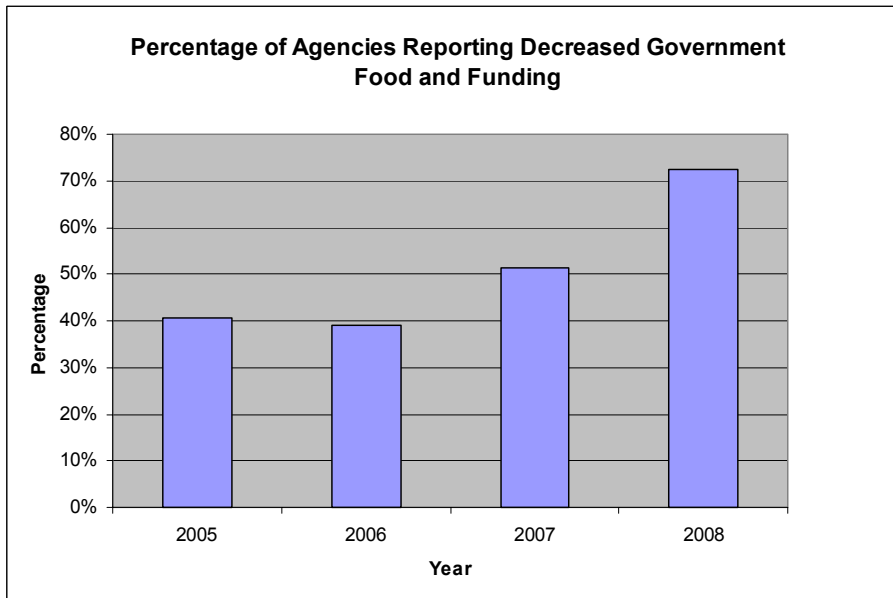
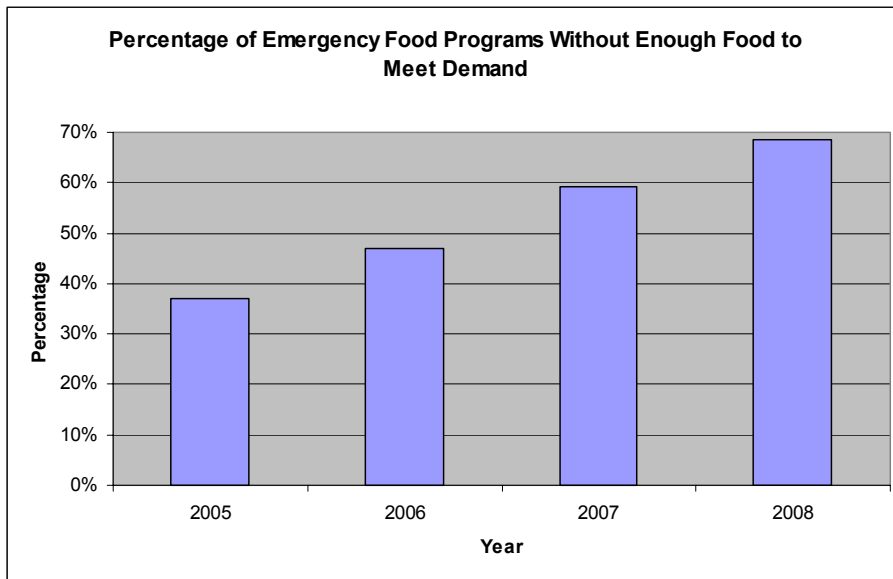
Jennifer March-Joly, Executive Director of the Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York also commented: “As the economy worsens and unemployment grows, it is critical that state and city officials take steps necessary to increase food stamp enrollment, invest needed resources in soup kitchens and food pantries, and maximize the use of school meals programs, ensuring that children and families in our city and state do not go hungry.”

Other findings of the survey:

- 68.6% of responding agencies do not distribute enough food to meet their current demand.
- 87.2% of responding agencies reported feeding an increased number of people in the last months. 55 % said this number increased “greatly.”
- Of the populations that increased “greatly” at responding agencies, the fastest growth was seen among families with children, senior citizens, and immigrants.
- 80% of responding agencies reported feeding an increased number of families with children over the last 12 months (versus 7.6% reporting a decrease, and 8.1% reporting no change).
- 74.7% of responding agencies reported feeding an increased number of seniors over the last 12 months (versus 7.6% reporting a decrease, and 12.7% reporting no change).
- 58.1% of responding agencies reported feeding an increased number of working people over the last 12 months (versus 8.1% reporting a decrease, and 12.6% reporting no change).
- 89% of responding agencies believe that their need will continue to increase in the next six months. 60.6% of responding agencies believe it will increase “greatly.”
- 72.3% of responding agencies reported receiving less government food and money in the last 12 months (vs. 10.6% reporting no change, and 13.9% reporting an increase).
- 54.8% of respondents reported using their own personal money “often,” “always,” or sometimes to support their feeding programs.
- 91.7% of responding agencies said they would like to improve the nutritional quality of the food they distribute. When asked to indicate the top way to accomplish that goal, 55.3% needed more fresh fruits and vegetables, 35.2% wanted more nutritious canned and dried foods, 5.5% wanted nutrition education for their clients, and 4.1% wanted nutrition education for their staffs.

2008 Borough Survey Results

Borough	% of agencies at which demand for food increased	% of agencies at which the amount of food was not enough to meet growing demand	% of agencies forced to ration food by limiting portion size, reducing hours of operation, and/or turning people away
The Bronx	88.1%	74.4%	71.8%
Brooklyn	85.9%	61.8%	50%
Manhattan	83.6%	52.2%	45.2%
Queens	84.2%	76.8%	64.2%
Staten Island	85.7%	71.4%	46.2%



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