



2017 Legislative Priorities Agenda

Federal Priorities

2017 Budget

The current Federal budget provides...

- \$313 million for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) commodities. This marks an increase of \$13.9 million from FY2016 and enhances the capacity of the nation's network of food banks to sustain 46 million food insecure Americans. It also includes an additional \$5 million increase for the administration of TEFAP to be used for the storage and distribution of USDA foods.
- \$6.35 billion in discretionary funding for WIC;
- \$79.682 billion in mandatory funding for SNAP; and
- \$23.2 billion in mandatory funding for child nutrition programs.

As the regional food bank for Suffolk and Nassau Counties, Long Island Cares distributed greater than 2.9 million pounds of TEFAP commodities in 2016. TEFAP product accounts for 40 percent of our total distribution efforts. Consequently, we appreciate the federal government's continued commitment to equipping the nation's food banks with increased commodity and administrative support. **We commend President Obama and Congress for the creation of a budget which prioritizes the fight against hunger by sustaining these programs designed to lessen food insecurity nationwide. We request that President Trump and Congress preserve these programs at their current levels of funding. Furthermore, we must voice our opposition to potential cuts to other safety net programs such as, Medicaid and Medicare, which so many of our clients utilize to make ends meet.** The only way to justify cuts to such programs would be by raising minimum wage, making college more affordable, and through the creation of a robust job creation initiative.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Reform

The federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) encourages work by boosting the wages of low-wage workers. The EITC provides families with children, approximately \$3,000 on average. This boost greatly helps low income families to meet their basic needs. However, the EITC offers very little help to low-wage workers without children. The average EITC benefit for an individual or couple without qualifying children in 2013 was just \$281. Furthermore, in 2016, this benefit was only worth a maximum of about \$500, and it begins to phase out while incomes are still below the federal poverty level.

Please support Senator Sherrod Brown's and Representative Richard Neal's proposed improvements to the EITC for childless workers which would almost triple the current maximum credit (to about \$1,400); increase the amount of income that tax filers can earn and remain eligible for the credit (from about \$14,900 to just over \$20,000 for a single filer); and expand the age range of workers who are eligible for the credit, from 25-64 to 21-64. Projections show that this proposal would benefit 16.2 million low-income workers in 2017. Supporting tax benefits that lift millions of Americans out of poverty promotes food security and lessens the heavy burden placed upon the nation's network of food banks.

Veteran Affairs

On September 29th President Obama signed The Continuing Appropriations and Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2017 (H.R. 5325). This legislation provides \$176.89 billion to the VA for FY2017, which is a nearly 9 percent increase from FY2016. This legislation allocates the VA \$102.53 billion in mandatory funding and \$74.36 billion in discretionary funding. It also establishes the funding for the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) which provides compensation, pensions, education assistance, and vocational rehabilitation and employment services at \$105,589,085 for FY2017 denoting a 15 percent increase over the previous year.

Approximately 200 veterans come to one of Long Island Cares' three satellite facilities each week for emergency food, household supplies, personal care items, and pet food. Furthermore, 40 disabled veterans regularly receive this assistance on a biweekly basis from our mobile pantry program. Lastly, our Veterans Project Mobile Outreach Unit which attends local Stand Downs and veteran community events distributed 19,682 meals to veterans on Long Island in 2016. **While we appreciate Congress' recent action to increase assistance to our nation's veterans, we implore our federal delegation to campaign for greater support in 2018 because we continue to encounter veteran homelessness and serve veterans with debilitating and chronic illness each day.** We possess a wonderful working relationship with our colleagues at the Northport VA and know that they could align the veterans we collaboratively serve with the services they desperately need with increased budgetary support.

New York State Priorities

Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP)

Through the efforts of the State Assembly, an additional \$500,000 was added to the HPNAP Program budget in 2016. This additional funding was provided to the State's food banks during the fourth quarter of 2016 when the need for emergency food historically increases due to the swiftly approaching holidays. The funds that Long Island Cares received provided the regional food bank with an opportunity to purchase additional fresh produce and lean proteins that were delivered to our member agencies to feed people in need this holiday season.

We at Long Island Cares propose that the State Legislature support annualizing the \$500,000 as an addition to HPNAP base funding for 2017, and that the funds be dispersed by the HPNAP Program once again during the fourth quarter of the year to provide the regional food banks with the ability to purchase additional foods during the holidays. This critical support afforded thousands of Long Islanders the opportunity to have the holiday meals so many of us take for granted each year.

Pilot Program to Support Innovative Approaches to Fighting Hunger

We are all too aware of the fact that hunger does not discriminate. Sadly, it impacts people of all ages and ethnicities, regardless of physical ability, sexual orientation, or immigration status. Food insecurity and hunger is a reality in every neighborhood to various extents throughout New York State. Therefore it is imperative that New York State through the HPNAP Program continue to collaborate with its eight regional food banks to develop new service models that not only maximize efficiency but also uniquely address the diverse challenges that various demographic groups encounter when they experience food insecurity and hunger.

Please support Long Island Cares' proposal to establish The Innovative Food Bank Pilot RFP, which would be funded by an additional \$1 million to the HPNAP Program in 2017, to provide start-up funding for its food banks to apply for in a competitive process. This additional one-time funding would support the development of innovative direct service programming to increase the capacity of the State's regional food banks to distribute additional food and support services to the 3,000,000 food insecure New Yorkers we collectively strive to sustain. The Innovative Food Bank Pilot RFP idea is based on the profound success we have had in utilizing HPNAP funds as seed funding in the creation of numerous programs in recent years which include: the region's first Mobile School Pantry in partnership with the Brentwood Union Free School District; Veterans Mobile Outreach Services; Children's Breakfast Food Trucks; and our award winning community-based Hunger Assistance Centers. Similar programs could be developed throughout the State and sustained by local private, corporate, and public partnerships for ongoing support. This proposal is supported by the Long Island Association, the Hunger Action Network of New York State, and several of our food bank colleagues and has been shared with both Governor Cuomo and Health Commissioner Zucker.

The Excelsior Scholarship

On January 3rd, Governor Cuomo unveiled the Excelsior Scholarship, the signature proposal of his 2017 Legislative Agenda, which aims to make college tuition-free for New York's middle class families at all SUNY and CUNY two and four year colleges. This initiative would cover middle class families and individuals earning up to \$125,000 a year. Currently 80 percent of households statewide make \$125,000 or less with an estimated 940,000 households having college-aged children that would be program eligible. Based on enrollment projections, the plan would cost approximately \$163 million per year once fully phased in. Studies show a person with a bachelor's degree, on average, will earn about 66 percent more over his or her lifetime than a person without a college degree and that a person with an associate's degree can expect to earn 24 percent more than a high school graduate. According to projections by the State's Department of Labor, approximately 3.5 million jobs statewide will require an associate's degree or greater by 2024. As the landscape of the global economy continues to evolve, investing in a highly-qualified workforce has never been more important, and this proposal aims to provide New York with the skilled workforce needed to compete.

Long Island Cares supports this proposal because it would provide dramatic fiscal relief to young adults and families earning less than the \$125,000 threshold. In fact, greater than half of our clients utilizing the emergency food network on Long Island are working families, who despite their best efforts are having prolonged difficulties in making ends meet each pay period. By providing free college tuition the State may in fact lessen protracted dependence on various governmental supports, and in the long term save money and retain talented graduates who frequently cannot afford to stay in the Empire State after graduation. We have seen food insecurity firsthand on college campuses as we have assisted Nassau Community College and Stony Brook University in the creation of their student operated on-campus pantry programs to support their fellow students, who while struggling to pay for their education are

having difficulties in providing themselves and their families with the prerequisite food needed to thrive in the classroom and workplace.

Suffolk County Priorities

Contracted Agency Funding to Long Island Cares, Inc.

Long Island Cares would like to thank County Executive Steve Bellone and the members of the Suffolk County Legislature for their decision to continue to allocate sufficient funding to us so that we have ability to provide the necessary level of support to Suffolk County's Department of Social Services (DSS). The \$219,877 in funds allocated by the County to Long Island Cares in FY 2016 purchased 80,389 pounds of food and supplies for eight Department of Social Services locations. The County's decision to maintain our contract at the current amount of \$218,977 for 2017 guarantees our ability to continue to adequately serve these agencies providing vital support for so many County residents in need.

Long Island Cares maintains favorable relationships with the USDA, the State Department of Health, and Feeding America which enhance our bulk purchasing capacity. These relationships make it possible for us to stretch \$219,877 into over 80,000 pounds of costly products such as infant formula, diapers, and various lean proteins. **We would like to further capitalize on our strong connections by expanding this partnership to include purchasing product in bulk and at reduced prices on behalf of the County to support its homeless shelters and licensed day care centers.** We pride ourselves in helping the County maximize its purchasing efficiency and emphasize that this successful partnership can expand to support the County in these other areas.

Nassau County Priorities

Emergency Food Purchases

We would like to capitalize on our strong relationships with both the federal and state governments to purchase product in bulk and at reduced prices on behalf of Nassau County in an effort to support its DSS centers, homeless shelters, and licensed day care centers. We recognize the difficult challenge that the County faces in deciding how to apportion limited funding to the numerous agencies and organizations necessitating County assistance. Your continuous support of Long Island Cares is appreciated and essential to our role in ending hunger in Nassau County.

About Long Island Cares

Long Island Cares, Inc.—The Harry Chapin Food Bank is Long Island’s first food bank and the region’s most comprehensive hunger action organization. Founded in 1980 by the late singer, songwriter and social activist, Harry Chapin, the mission of Long Island Cares is to bring together all available resources for the benefit of the hungry on Long Island and to provide to the best of our ability for the humanitarian needs of our community. Our goals are to provide emergency food where and when it is needed, sponsor a wide variety of innovative direct service programs that help families achieve self-sufficiency and educate the general public about the causes and consequences on Long Island. Today, Long Island Cares is led by his wife and partner Sandy Chapin, a dedicated Board of Directors, and talented staff working out of their 35,000 sq. ft. facility in Hauppauge and three storefront service centers in Freeport, Lindenhurst, and Huntington Station. The organization provides nutritional food and support services for a network of more than 580 community-based member agencies including food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, child care programs, senior nutrition sites, disability organizations, veterans’ services and more. While the annual distribution of over 7 million pounds of nutritional food is at the heart of Long Island Cares’ operations, we also provide a broad array of programs and services including hunger education, vocational and job training, supplemental food programs for children, the provision of new school supplies, job development, legislative advocacy, and on-site triage food pantries.

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