

On behalf of Single Stop, I wish to thank you and the Committee for the opportunity to submit comments on the issue of pervasive hunger in New York City. My testimony today will focus on food insecurity among college students.

Single Stop has over 65 sites across all five boroughs that help low-income families and individuals reach financial stability by providing access to the full spectrum of available resources. We have served over 1 million low-income New York City households since 2007.

Through our work at eight CUNY sites, we find that few people associate college students with hunger, despite growing evidence of food insecurity on college campuses. In fact, a ground breaking study found that almost 40 percent of CUNY students experienced food insecurity in the previous year. At our sites, we see students who are struggling without enough to eat who are worried, jittery, and unable to concentrate.

Single Stop's college sites enable students to tap into existing federal and local resources that can be used as a supplemental form of financial aid, thereby preventing students from being forced to choose between a degree and basic necessities like groceries.

One key resource our sites use to fight hunger is campus food pantries. Single Stop believes that food pantries should be the norm across New York college campuses, and that the City Council should support their expansion and long-term sustainability. Food pantries are an important presence on campuses particularly because of federal restrictions on college students receiving SNAP benefits.

In partnership with the Food Bank for New York City, a few CUNYs have piloted pantry services through their Single Stops. CUNY and Food Bank are continuing their partnership to bring pantries to campuses, and we know that other schools are interested in developing campus pantries, but despite low startup costs, the difficulty in establishing a consistent funding stream is acting as a barrier.

I hope you will refer to my written testimony for more information, but I'd like to leave you with Ben's story. Ben is a single father attending a nursing program at Kingsborough Community College who lost his job, fell behind on rent, and was facing eviction when he was connected with the Single Stop on campus.

Hattie, our site lead who worked with him, was able to immediately connect him with the campus food pantry as she connected him with a lawyer to stave off eviction, got his daughter into child care, helped him secure SNAP and WIC, and used the school's resource book to help him find a part-time job.

Hattie likes to say that a lot of her students just need a break. We must do our best to give it to them by providing more resources like food pantries to support hard working students like Ben invest in their futures, and allow them a fair shot at an education and economic mobility.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.