



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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Council Members push to increase food stamp participation among eligible immigrants -New report shows 1 in 4 of eligible, non-participating New Yorkers are immigrants-

FLUSHING MEADOWS, QUEENS – With a new report showing that one in four New Yorkers eligible for food stamps but unenrolled are immigrants, Speaker Christine C. Quinn said that the City needs to play a more active role in helping eligible immigrants and their families sign up for the program. The report, *Immigrant Access to the Food Stamp Program*, was conducted by FoodChange, one of the City's largest anti-poverty organizations. It examines the number and location of eligible immigrants and a series of barriers to their enrollment. Representatives from FoodChange and other community-based organizations joined Speaker Quinn, Congressman Anthony Weiner and Council Members to announce a new partnership to help increase food stamp enrollment.

Eligible immigrants often do not realize that they can participate in the Food Stamps Program. Children under 18 who are documented immigrants or born in the US may be eligible for Food Stamps regardless of their parents' immigration status. The program requires that adult immigrants have 5 years of qualified residency status or other qualified status to be eligible. Applying to and participating in the Food Stamp program does not effect one's citizenship application or US Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) decisions. Even if adult members of a household are not eligible for food stamps, they can apply for their children without fear.

Speaker Christine Quinn said, "With thousands of immigrants and their families struggling to put food on their table, the City needs to take steps to help more New Yorkers take advantage of available food assistance services. Many community-based organizations are already reaching out in immigrant communities and helping them access food. The Council's new partnership will help expand their work to enroll eligible immigrants and help more New Yorkers access healthy food."

"FoodChange worked diligently to identify the issues; now we are excited to alleviate the problem," said Nicole Christensen, FoodChange's Director of Food Access. "We are working with immigrant organizations and community leaders who can truly inform and affect their communities. Our hope is that New York City can lead the nation by increasing food stamp participation, especially within the immigrant population, and maximizing the city's use of federal dollars."

The problem of hunger is a citywide crisis. Emergency food providers serve more than 1.2 million New Yorkers each year. The problem is even more acute among the City's most vulnerable populations. For instance, one in four seniors relies on emergency food sources, such as soup kitchens or food pantries and one in five worry about where their next meal is coming from.

Last month, the Council substantially enhanced its organizing and outreach ability by partnering with the New York City Central Labor Council and its member unions. As part of the new partnership, labor leaders and union members will participate in training sessions to identify New Yorkers who may be eligible for food stamps and encourage friends and neighbors to enroll in the federal program.

"No New Yorker should ever go to bed hungry," said Councilman Eric Gioia. "By cutting through bureaucratic red tape and making the entire process more coordinated and simple, we can help our City's most vulnerable citizens access the food aid they're qualified for and deserve. As a City, and as a people, we can and must do better."

In addition to the citywide campaign against hunger and obesity in the City, the Council has helped New Yorkers use food stamps at farmers' markets and is working with the Administration to coordinate the City's food system and expand outreach about various food assistance programs.

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