

For Immediate Release
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As Food Stamps Marks 30th Anniversary, Groups Call Upon Congress to Strengthen Program

Note to Photo Editor: Digital Photos Available Upon Request

(Albany, NY) Today on World Food Day, the Nutrition Consortium of NYS joined with statewide advocacy groups, emergency food providers, religious and local leaders to recognize the 30th anniversary of the current Food Stamp Program, highlight its effectiveness in fighting hunger and call on New York State's Senators to make needed improvements when Congress reauthorizes the program this fall.

Formally established on September 29, 1977, the Food Stamp Program is America's first line of defense against hunger. Food stamps serve over 25 million Americans, including 13 million children (one in five), making it the nation's largest anti-hunger program. In New York, 724,000 low-income children and 300,000 low-income elderly are provided meals each day through the Food Stamp Program.

In total, about 1.8 million New Yorkers receive food stamp benefits averaging \$1.16 per person per meal to buy food each month. This generates roughly \$4.2 billion in economic activity in rural, urban and suburban communities each year. Many of those who receive food stamps are working and need this help to provide food for their families.

Due in large part to the Food Stamp Program, severe hunger and diseases related to malnutrition are rare in the United States. Yet, too many New York households struggle to put enough food on the table and more than two million turn to emergency feeding programs each year. Many are not eligible for food stamps despite their low incomes due to restrictive program rules. Others do receive food stamps but the benefits are too small to allow them to meet all their food needs. Even more eligible New York households miss out on an estimated \$1.5 billion in food stamp benefits because they do not participate in this nutrition assistance program.

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“Most of us have a friend or relative who is struggling to make ends meet, whether they work for low wages, are temporarily out of work, or are elderly or disabled. Food stamps help put food on the table for people facing difficult economic times,” said Trudi Renwick, Senior Economist with the Fiscal Policy Institute. “Yet the value of the food stamp benefit has eroded over time, and at the current average of about \$1 per person per meal, it’s just not enough.”

The Nutrition Consortium of NYS, Child Care Coordinating Council of NYS, Empire Justice Center, Fiscal Policy Institute and FOCUS Churches of Albany along with dozens of other organizations, representing hundreds of community agencies across the state, called on our Senators to secure significant new investments for the Food Stamp Program in the 2007 Farm Bill. In their recommendation letter the coalition urged New York’s Senators to advocate to Senate leadership and Agriculture Committee members that the Senate Farm Bill must contain no less than an additional \$4 billion to bolster the Food Stamp Program, as provided by the House’s bill passed earlier this summer, and should build on the success of this vital nutrition assistance program to improve benefit levels and extend eligibility to more vulnerable households.

“The overwhelming witness of Scriptures in the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions insists that it is society’s responsibility to address and alleviate poverty. The sad reality is that no matter how hard the faith community has worked over the last three decades to help feed our hungry neighbors, the lines just keep getting longer. Charity cannot be an effective substitute for government action,” stated the Reverend Debra Jameson, who runs a food pantry and soup kitchen for FOCUS Churches in Albany.

In the call to action, Linda Bopp, Executive Director of the Nutrition Consortium of NYS, and host of the event stated, “It is unacceptable to allow our vulnerable community members to go without adequate food. We ask our Senators to guard against any amendments or efforts that do harm to food stamp households currently eligible to participate in the program. We emphasize that resources in the nutrition title should be used to strengthen existing nutrition assistance programs. In particular, the Food Stamp Program is one of the most efficient federal programs, and if improved, would go far towards ending hunger in our nation.”

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** All speakers available for interviews pre or post event. For contact information please see the Agency/Speakers Bio Sheet in your press packet.

Partnering Agencies and Speaker Biographies

**The Nutrition Consortium of
New York State**

**235 Lark Street
Albany, NY 12210**

(518) 436-8757
www.hungernys.org

The mission of the Nutrition Consortium of New York State, Inc., is to alleviate hunger for poor and near poor residents of New York State, by expanding the availability of, access to, and use of governmental nutrition assistance programs. In pursuit of this mission, the Nutrition Consortium engages in the following activities: outreach, education, program development and implementation, policy work, coalition building, data analysis and research.

Linda Bopp is the Executive Director of the Nutrition Consortium.

Misha Marvel, Program Analyst is the Nutrition Consortium's lead contact on senior and older adult nutrition issues.

Dawn Secor, Food Stamp Specialist is responsible for policy work, advocacy, and education on issues connected to the Food Stamp Program.

The Empire Justice Center

**119 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12210**

(518) 462-6831
www.empirejustice.org

The Empire Justice Center is the only statewide, multi-issue, multi-strategy non-profit law firm focused on changing the "systems" within which poor and low income families live. With a focus on poverty law, Empire Justice undertakes research and training, acts as an informational clearinghouse, and provides litigation backup to local legal services programs and community based organizations. As an advocacy organization, we engage in legislative and administrative advocacy on behalf of those impacted by poverty and discrimination. As a non-profit law firm, we provide legal assistance to those in need and undertake impact litigation in order to protect and defend the rights of disenfranchised New Yorkers. The Empire Justice Center has offices located in Rochester, White Plains, Long Island and Albany.

Cathy Roberts, Senior Paralegal focuses on policy and advocacy work involving food stamps and health insurance access.

The Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI)

**1 Lear Jet Lane
Latham, NY 12110**

(518) 786-3156
www.fiscalspolicy.org

The Fiscal Policy Institute is a nonpartisan research and education organization that focuses on the broad range of tax, budget, economic and related public policy issues that affect the quality of life and the economic well-being of New York State residents. Founded in 1991, FPI's work is intended to further the development and implementation of public policies that create a strong economy in which prosperity is broadly shared by all New Yorkers. FPI works to increase public and governmental understanding of issues related to the fairness of New York's tax system and the stability and adequacy of state and local public services. Each year FPI issues an [analysis of the state's fiscal situation and tax system](#). FPI also issues special reports and articles on a variety of related subjects. For example, FPI has completed major studies of the state's unemployment insurance system and of the issues surrounding the provision of paid family leave through New York's temporary disability insurance program. In addition, FPI maintains an active program of public education.

Trudi Renwick, Senior Economist is the author of *Poverty and Single Parent Families: A Study of Minimal Subsistence Household Budgets* (Garland Press, 1998).

FOCUS Churches of Albany

**275 State St
Albany, NY 12210**

(518) 443-0460

FOCUS Churches of Albany is a collaboration between faith communities committed to provide a ministry of presence, support, and advocacy for the victims of society's injustice and neglect; to speak the truth in places of power on behalf of the powerless; to offer new possibilities of wholeness to the lonely and alienated.

FOCUS operates 2 emergency feeding programs in downtown Albany. Members congregations include: Emmanuel Baptist, First Israel AME, First Presbyterian, Metropolitan Community of the Hudson Valley, Trinity United Methodist and Westminster Presbyterian. Interfaith Pantry Affiliates: Congregation Beth Emeth, First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany, New Covenant Presbyterian and St. Andrew's Episcopal.

Reverend Debra Jameson is the Community Minister for the FOCUS Churches of Albany.

**The New York State Child Care
Coordinating Council
(NYSCCCC)**

**230 Washington Ave Extension
Albany, NY 12203**

(518) 690-4217

www.nyscccc.org

Rooted in a statewide network of child care resource and referral agencies, the membership of NYSCCCC includes wide representation from child care providers, parents, businesses, community organizations, and other individuals. NYSCCC has been working to make quality, affordable child care available to New York's families since 1975.