October 18th, 2016

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

We still have a hunger problem ... [but] there is no excuse for why any man, woman, or child should go hungry in the state of New York.

—Andrew Cuomo, 2015

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As you know, we live in a modern, comparatively affluent state in which hunger remains a persistent problem. In 2014, almost 2.7 million New Yorkers relied on emergency food programs, and 16% of respondents to a Food Research & Action Center survey said they were still struggling to afford enough food for their households. We thank you for your efforts to date to combat hunger and poverty.

Signing Senate Bill 7833/Assembly Bill 10584 into law would be another step forward in this fight. The “Farm to Food Bank” bill allows New York farmers to receive a refundable tax credit for donations made to food banks and other emergency food programs serving low-income New Yorkers. If enacted, it would benefit New York farmers by making it more economically feasible for them to donate food to those in need; the bill would also benefit the environment by decreasing food waste and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from landfills; and, most importantly, it would benefit impoverished, food-insecure individuals by increasing their access to fresh, healthy produce.

S.7833/A.10584 would permit eligible farmers to claim a refundable tax credit equal to 25% of the wholesale cost of their qualified donations to food banks or other public, charitable, or non-profit emergency food programs, up to $5,000 per year. The current federal tax deduction does little to incentivize the large number of New York farmers who earn minimal or no farm income to make such donations. A state tax credit to offset the out-of-pocket costs of harvesting, processing, and transporting food that might otherwise go unharvested or undelivered would encourage our farmers to give more generously than they already do. Let’s provide them this incentive.

Fresh fruits and vegetables left unharvested or dumped in landfills due to imperfect aesthetics, market fluctuations, or other economic considerations contribute to food waste and greenhouse gas emissions. They are also a monumental waste of resources such as water, labor, energy, land, and fertilizer. Food scraps that wind up in landfills rot, producing methane gas, which is 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide in driving global warming. The Farm to Food Bank bill would reduce food waste and mitigate New York’s contribution to greenhouse gases while simultaneously providing fresh, nutritious food to the hungry.
If you do the math, a farmer who receives the maximum $5,000 tax credit would have actually provided $20,000 worth of fresh food (at wholesale prices) to an emergency food program. For those who don’t always know where their next meal is coming from, such donations have the potential to positively impact their health outcomes in the long-term and meet their immediate food needs in the short-term. Fresh, locally grown food that might otherwise go to waste can now be distributed to New York’s neediest populations via the emergency food programs that serve them.

It’s not often that one piece of legislation produces across-the-board benefits for so many for well under a million dollars. S.7833/A.10584 has strong bipartisan support (it passed unanimously in both chambers) and represents a win for our farming families, a win for the environment, and a win for New York’s hungry men, women, and children.

For this reason, we, the undersigned, strongly support this bill and respectfully request that you sign it into law.

Sincerely,

Hunger Action Network of New York State (HANNYS)
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
New York Farm Bureau
Hunger Solutions New York
Food Bank Association of New York State
Food Bank For New York City
Food Bank for Westchester
Food Bank of Central New York
Food Bank of the Southern Tier
Food Bank of Western New York
Island Harvest
Long Island Cares, Inc
Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York
The Food Pantries for the Capital District
Make the Road New York
City Harvest
Feeding America
Foodlink
Hunger Free America
Agricultural Stewardship Association
American Farmland Trust
Catskill Mountainkeeper
Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship
Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE)
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County
Earthjustice
Empire Justice Center
Farmers Market Federation of NY
Food & Water Watch
Just Food
National Council of Jewish Women New York
New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV)
New York School Nutrition Association
Northeast Dairy Foods Association, Inc
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY)
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NESAWG)
NYPIRG
River Fund
Scenic Hudson
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter
Watershed Agricultural Council
WESPAC Foundation
Whole Foods Market
AIDS Center of Queens County (ACQC)
Alexandria Community Food Pantry
Alliance for Positive Health
Amagansett Food Institute
Apple Hills, LLC
Association for Mental Health and Wellness
Bed-Stuy Campaign Against Hunger
Beth-Hark Christian Counseling Center, Inc
Bnai Raphael Chessed Organization, Inc
Bread of Life Outreach Center
Broadway Community / 4 Star Soup Kitchen
Bronx Bethany Community Corp
Brookfield Food Cupboard
Calvary Food Pantry
Cameron Community Ministries
Capital Roots
Catholic Charities of Broome County
Catholic Charities Tompkins/Tioga
Charles Settlement House
Christ Disciples International Ministries, Inc
Christ Jesus Baptist Church Food Pantry
Community Center of Northern Westchester
Community Health Action of Staten Island
Community Help in Park Slope (CHiPS)
Community Impact at Columbia University
Community Services Housing Development Corp
Council of Jewish Organizations Staten Island Food Pantry
Cuyler-Warren United Methodist Church
EAC Network Meals on Wheels
East New York Farms!
East Rochester Community Resource Center
Elmira Community Kitchen / Catholic Charities of Chemung & Schuyler Counties
Family of Woodstock
Feed My Sheep Community Food Pantry
First United Methodist Church of Schenectady
Food for All Erie County
Food Pantry and Social Justice Ministries, Church of St. Vincent De Paul
Franklin Community Center
Friendship Donations Network
Garden of Eve Organic Farm & Market
Gouverneur Neighborhood Center
Greater Galway Community Services Association Food Pantry
Greenpoint Reformed Church Hunger Program
Groton Food Providers
Harlem Community Nutritional Service Agency
Harrisville Food Pantry
Hartwick /Mt. Vision Food Pantry
Help from People to People
Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen
Hour Children Food Pantry
Hudson River Housing, Inc
iEat Green, LLC
Jewish Community Center of Staten Island
Kerith SDA Church
Lily’s Farm
Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry at St. Joseph the Worker
Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry at Wallkill Reformed Church
Loaves and Fishes Outreach Soup Kitchen at The Rome Wesleyan Church
LOOP Ministries
Lost Sheep Christian Center for All
Lowville Food Pantry, Inc
Massena First United Methodist Church Soup Kitchen
McGraw Community Food Pantry
Mercy INN Soup Kitchen
Milk Pail, LLC
Mission Share Outreach Center
Natural Contents Kitchen
Nazareth Housing
New Covenant Community Development Corp
Newman Memorial Church Food Pantry/Soup Kitchen
North Country Ministry, Inc
Open Arms Care Center Emergency Food Pantry
Otego Community Food Pantry
Our Father’s Kitchen
Pantry of Angels
Pavilion Community Food Pantry
Project Hospitality
Restoration Society, Inc
Reynoldsville Food Pantry
Ridgewood Older Adult Center
Schenectady Inner City Ministry
Schuyler Outreach Food Pantry / Catholic Charities of Chemung & Schuyler Counties
Sinclairville Food Cupboard
Slow Food North Shore
Slow Food NYC
South West Ecumenical Ministries, Inc
Southtowns Christian Center Food Pantry
St. Ann’s Corner of Harm Reduction
St. Anthony of Padua Food Pantry
St. Bernard Social Parish Ministry
St. Francis of Rome Food Pantry
St. Louis de Montfort RC Church Parish Outreach
St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church Feeding Program
St. Mary’s Church Food Pantry
St. Vincent DePaul, Elmont
Staten Island CSA
Staten Island Hunger Task Force
Sunnyside CSA
Temple Shaaray Tefila
The Albany Damien Center, LLC
The Country Pantry
The Greater Sayville Food Pantry
The Lunch Box, Program of Dutchess Outreach
The Retreat, Inc
Ulster Corps
United Yes We Can, Unidas Se Se Puede, Inc
Wayne County Action Program, Inc
Wilson Community Food Pantry
Yellow Barn Biodynamic Farm