



## THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

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### ***WITH ONE IN SEVEN SENIORS FACING FOOD INSECURITY, CM CHIN INTRODUCES BILL TO EXPAND REACH OF SNAP***

#### ***Senior food access bill is part of Council-wide package on food justice***

**CITY HALL**-Last week, Council Member Margaret S. Chin introduced legislation to require the City to create a plan to combat food insecurity among older New Yorkers living in isolation. [Intro 1659](#) calls on the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department for the Aging (DFTA) to identify the specific barriers keeping eligible seniors from enrolling in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The legislation will help older New Yorkers, who may be homebound, isolated, lack English-language proficiency, and/or living in transportation deserts to access SNAP and other lifesaving City services.

“With 11% of older New Yorkers facing food insecurity, the City must do more to combat hunger among our seniors,” **said Council Member Margaret S. Chin, Chair of the Committee on Aging.** “My bill will expand the nutritional safety net by pinpointing those seniors who are eligible for SNAP, but are not aware of the program. Food justice is for everyone, and initiatives aimed at creating equitable services need to include older New Yorkers. I am proud to join the Speaker and my colleagues on the City Council on this effort addressing food insecurity at every level—and for every generation—in New York City.”

According to the Food and Nutrition Service of the US Department of Agriculture, roughly 3 out of 5 seniors eligible for SNAP benefits are not enrolled. For many older New Yorkers, social isolation, lack of English language proficiency and decreased mobility can create large barriers to accessing vital services like SNAP. By requiring the City to develop an aggressive outreach plan, Intro 1659 will proactively break down the barriers to food access and help ensure that all of New York’s seniors are receiving the nutritional assistance they need and are entitled to.

“Too many New Yorkers have to choose between buying groceries, filling a prescription, or paying the next utility bill,” said **Chris Widelo, Associate State Director of AARP New York**. “SNAP benefits can be a lifeline for older adults on fixed incomes, and particularly for New Yorkers of color. Statewide, closing the SNAP enrollment gap would increase income for New Yorkers 60-plus by more than \$500 million annually, and most of these additional funds would go to older black, Latino and Asian New Yorkers. AARP thanks Councilwoman Chin for introducing this important bill to put healthy food on the tables of more older New Yorkers.”

“1 in 5 NYC residents 65 or older rely on soup kitchens or food pantries to help meet basic food needs. As proposals from Washington, D.C. threaten to take meals away from our senior residents by limiting SNAP eligibility, it is increasingly urgent that New York City take action to ensure our neighbors have access to nutrition assistance resources,” said **Zac Hall, Vice President of Programs at Food Bank For New York City**. “We applaud Council Member Chin and Kallos for introducing this legislation and stand with them to ensure SNAP works for more of our senior neighbors in need.”

“Food insecurity among older New Yorkers is a serious issue facing our communities, and we commend Council Member Chin for her continued advocacy on behalf of seniors,” said **Susan Stamler, Executive Director of United Neighborhood Houses**. “Our 2005 and 2017 Aging in the Shadows reports found that factors like health and socioeconomic status are indicators for social isolation among New York’s senior population, and our work since then has prioritized empowering older adults to advocate for healthy food access in their neighborhoods. Council Member Chin was by our side earlier this year as we worked to increase the budget for meals served in senior centers, and we are proud to continue the effort alongside her to ensure seniors have the supports they need to remain healthy.”

“LiveOn NY commends Council Member Chin’s continued efforts to combat food insecurity among older New Yorkers,” said **Allison Nickerson, Executive Director of LiveOn NY**. “The SNAP program helps older adults put food on the table, and enables them to shift their resources to other critical needs, such as housing and healthcare costs. And while we know that good health is closely linked to a nutritious diet, roughly 3 out of 5 older adults who are eligible for and in need of SNAP benefits are still unenrolled, making this bill and all efforts to identify and enroll seniors in public benefits so critical.”

“The Lower East Side and Chinatown have over 30,000 seniors age 60 and over, and the majority of income eligible seniors are not receiving SNAP,” said **Steve Herrick, Executive Director of Cooper Square Committee**. “Language barriers, social isolation and mobility issues are significant factors in under-enrollment. Our organization does outreach and enroll scores of seniors every year, but the city needs to do much more to publicize SNAP and enroll seniors to combat food insecurity. We commend Council Member Chin for leading this effort with Intro 1659.”

Intro 1659 represents Council Member Chin’s latest efforts to provide food justice for older New Yorkers. During the FY 2020 budget negotiations, she secured a historic across-the-board **\$15 million** investment in senior center meals. The **\$15 million** in permanent City funding in the budget included **\$10 million** to be released in FY20 and **\$5 million** to be released in FY21. The funding will be used to increase the meals reimbursement rate and provide underpaid kitchen staff with living wages.

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