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# ***Committee Meeting***

of

ASSEMBLY AGRICULTURE AND  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

ASSEMBLY FAMILY, WOMEN, AND  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

*"Testimony concerning the viability of food banks in New Jersey"*

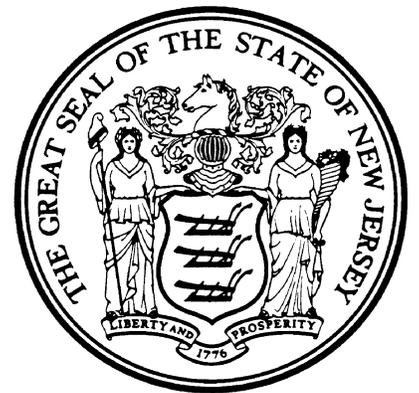
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**LOCATION:** Committee Room 11  
State House Annex  
Trenton, New Jersey

**DATE:** November 22, 2004  
2:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES PRESENT:**

Assemblyman Robert J. Smith II, Co-Chair  
Assemblywoman Mary T. Previte, Co-Chair  
Assemblyman Douglas H. Fisher, Co-Vice Chair  
Assemblyman Herb Conaway Jr.  
Assemblyman Ronald S. Dancer  
Assemblyman John C. Gibson  
Assemblyman Joseph V. Egan  
Assemblyman Guy R. Gregg  
Assemblyman Eric Munoz



**ALSO PRESENT:**

Jeffrey T. Climpson  
Michele Leblanc  
Office of Legislative Services  
Committee Aides

Wali Abdul-Salaam  
Jessica Perl  
Assembly Majority  
Committee Aides

Jennifer J. Rasch  
Nancy S. Fitterer  
Assembly Republican  
Committee Aides

*Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by*  
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,  
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey

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Office of Legislative Services  
Committee Aides

Assembly Majority  
Committee Aides

Assembly Republican  
Committee Aides

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**ASSEMBLYWOMAN MARY T. PREVITE (Co-Chair):** Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I'm Mary Previte, the Chair of the Family, Women, and Children's Services Committee.

And I'll let my partner introduce himself.

**ASSEMBLYMAN ROBERT J. SMITH II(Co-Chair):** Good afternoon.

I'm Assemblyman Robert Smith, Chairman of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

I just want to take 30 seconds or so and introduce the members of that Committee. To my far left is Assemblyman Dancer; second to my left -- second from far left is Assemblyman Gibson, the former Chairman of this Committee, Agriculture and Natural Resources; and, of course, the Vice Chairman of the Committee is Douglas Fisher.

I just wanted to briefly say thank you for everybody coming out today and showing your interest, showing your support.

And I just wanted to compliment Assemblywoman Previte on the initiative that she took in setting up this Joint Committee. It is extremely important, and it's very timely this time of year that we are considering the issue of food banks and hunger in the State of New Jersey. And, hopefully, the testimony will enlighten us further as to what steps we need to take, as legislators, to improve those conditions here in New Jersey.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you.

And I will allow members of my Committee, and the substitutes, to introduce themselves. And I'm going to let you just each introduce yourself and what district you come from.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, Mr. Chairman. Assemblyman Guy Gregg, District 24. I represent all of Sussex County, five towns in western Morris County, including Mount Olive, Long Valley -- my home -- both Chesters, Netcong; Tewksbury and Califon, in Hunterdon County.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Dr. Munoz.

ASSEMBLYMAN MUNOZ: Yes, Eric Munoz, representing the 21st district, which is the only district in New Jersey that represents four counties, including Union, Morris, Essex, and Somerset.

Thank you, Madam Chair, Co-Chair.

ASSEMBLYMAN EGAN: Assemblyman Egan, from the 17th district. I represent New Brunswick and the five surrounding towns adjacent to New Brunswick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Let me start by giving you a number that you need to keep in your head. All of you experts out there have told me that in the richest state in the nation, New Jersey, we now have close to three-quarters of a million people that are hungry and needing food support. That's very close to 750,000 people that are using various food support services. Some of these are senior citizens who are living on a set income, or living on Social Security. And some of them are people whose jobs have been downsized -- the working poor, or their jobs have been sent over seas, who have used up

their life savings, who have used up their unemployment insurance and are now among the working poor and need the extra food for help.

But I'm not the expert here today, and nor are we here just for an ain't-it-awful-session to talk about the troubles of hunger in New Jersey. We are very anxious to hear the real-life experience of the increasing numbers of people using the services of our food banks, our soup kitchens, our food pantries, and why that is. And especially, what we need to do about this, when you are telling me that the resources are declining and you're having to cut back on the services.

So we're really anxious to hear solutions and things that you think we might do to help this situation.

We have a number of people who have signed up to testify today. Because she needs to be going off to another meeting, let's start with Teresa Kelly, the Deputy Mayor of Buena Vista Township, and part of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey's South Branch.

Ms. Kelly, thank you.

**DEPUTY MAYOR TERESA KELLY:** Good evening, everyone.

Can you hear me?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Is her microphone on?

MS. LEBLANC (Committee Aide): No, it's not.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: We need you to talk into the microphone so that you're--

MS. LEBLANC: Press the button. The red is good.

And could you--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: We need you to bring the little mike -- so that it's recording you.

DEPUTY MAYOR KELLY: Good afternoon, everyone.

I have been on the Advisory Board of the FoodBank for the past 10 years, and the main office -- the branch office -- is located in Egg Harbor Township, of Atlantic County. And our designated area is Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, and parts of Burlington counties, all of which are serviced by our 27,000 square foot warehouse, with 17,000 cubic feet of refrigeration. And it's in the heart of Egg Harbor Township, on the Blackhorse Pike, near the Shore Mall -- is where we're located.

Most of our member charities are a full-time operation, serving the needs of their clients. Our warehouse is open weekdays from 8:00 to 4:00 p.m., and Saturdays 8:00 to noon. With the help of thousands of volunteers, and a dedicated staff of 12 full-time employees, we distribute an average of 55,000 pounds of groceries every week, giving an annual distribution of more than 2.9 million pounds of food and grocery items reaching the needy in our community.

Because nearly 1 million people in the State of New Jersey are at risk of hunger, and more than half of them are children, elderly, or disabled, it is very important.

Recently, in the census, there was 140,000 seniors identified, and 11,000 were below the poverty line. And the latest census in Atlantic County, alone, is up to 254,000 people. As we know, the casinos in the area have drawn quite a few people that are coming for jobs, and a lot of these people do not get jobs.

I will be brief. Some of the top five reasons for hunger in our area -- and we've averaged it out -- top is disabled, 414 people. And that's an average figure. Two, the elderly, 392 people; third, long-term unemployment, 357

people; number four, underemployment, 306 people; and number five, the single parent, 222. These are the averages that come monthly to the FoodBank for assistance.

And I'm just here to stress the importance of the FoodBank and the great job that they are doing with mostly all volunteers, very little paid staff. And I think it's very important. I'm just here to express this on behalf-- Evelyn Benton could not come. As you know, this the busiest season, getting ready for Thanksgiving. And I hear we are very short this year with turkeys. We've tried our best, but it's not happening.

So I just want to express this to the Committee and hope that you'll keep this in mind for the future.

And I thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Do we have questions for our guest? (no response)

I just have a question myself. I just need to know: What can the Legislature do to support the efforts that you have? Are you seeing a declining amount of food resource and an increasing number of people who need the resource?

DEPUTY MAYOR KELLY: That is true. And there has been a decrease from the Federal and the State towards this effort. There has been a decrease in Federal and State funds that help this effort. So we are seeing an increase in the need, and a decrease of the funds, and fund-raising, and things of that. Because I believe that people are not in the best of shape, financially, and are giving less. So that does offset what we have to offer the people that really need it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Could you also tell me what you need? What are the kinds of things that your FoodBank needs?

DEPUTY MAYOR KELLY: I would say an increase in funding. That would definitely help us. And if it could be put in there every year, because every year is different. There's been increases. So at least if we know what the allocation is, we can work from there. I don't believe it's a set number that is happening at this point.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Are you turning people away?

DEPUTY MAYOR KELLY: Not that I'm aware of, no. We would never turn anyone away. We may not be able to give them everything they need, but no one is turned away.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you very much.

Assemblyman Gibson.

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBSON: Thank you.

I'd just like to welcome Teresa here. She's the vice mayor of one of my constituent municipalities. And also, I would appreciate, if she hasn't distributed her report, that she send a copy to my office.

DEPUTY MAYOR KELLY: Okay. I can give you a copy right now -- some of the figures.

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBSON: Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: We'll ask Adele LaTourette, New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition, please.

We've had the benefit of Adele's testimony before our Committee in the past.

We welcome you.

**ADELE LATOURETTE:** Thank you, Assemblywoman.

It's great to be here.

I really wanted to thank you for your efforts in putting this together. I think it's wonderful. I think it's a great first step.

You're going to hear a lot today from people who are actually doing direct-service feeding. So I'm going to talk a little bit about that, but I'm really going to focus on what you are trying to get to the heart of, which is what you guys can do. And I think we have some specific suggestions.

I just want to go through some definitions, just because people who aren't in the emergency food world, which we're so in, tend to get confused about what is a food pantry, what is a soup kitchen, what is a food bank. So if I could just do that quickly.

A food bank is a large warehousing operation that actually collects large donations of food. I mean, it's warehouses. It's literally a bank. And to those banks they have member agencies. And those agencies are -- they can be anything from child care centers to emergency food pantries. And an emergency food pantry is, generally -- it's a site that gives out groceries. It's groceries for people to take home and cook, as opposed to a soup kitchen, which, as you all know, is where people go for an actual meal. So just to give you a little bit of background, in terms of what is what--

New Jersey's food pantries are seeing more and more working people. I was at a meeting of the Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee last week. And Rutgers is trying to do a geomapping of where are the food pantries in New Jersey, and the soup kitchens, and the school breakfast programs --

where are all the feeding sites. And then they were doing -- they were comparing that to where are people who live below poverty. And my point was, food pantries serve far more than people who live below poverty. We serve people who make \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 a year, who are ineligible for any kind of Federal benefit, who have nowhere else to go. And they go to emergency food pantries in order that they can pay their mortgage.

New Jersey is a different state from, kind of, a traditionally more entrenched poor group. We feed people everywhere from the poorest of the poor up to middle-income people. I work out of a food pantry that's based in Bergen County. And Bergen County has a reputation. We have fed people from Alpine, and Upper Saddle River, and Ridgewood, and Wycoff, and places where you don't consider there being people, who live in those homes, who are hungry. But they are. Hunger looks very different in New Jersey. It looks different from one county to the next. Sussex County tends to have transportation issues. There are a variety of contributing factors.

But as the Assemblywoman said, there are lots of hungry people in New Jersey. There are lots of hungry seniors, especially, in New Jersey. I was also at a national meeting of anti-hunger advocates last week. New Jersey seems to be seeing particularly an increase in seniors. We have a year-long waiting list in some areas for Meals-on-Wheels. People have, really, no other resources. They can't get out of their house. So we actually have feeding programs in the state -- emergency food programs -- who have set up separate distributions just for seniors, where they go and deliver food specifically to seniors.

In terms of solutions, I'm going to be very specific. New York, every year since, I believe, the late '80s, has had an allocation of some \$24

million, per year, for the purchase of emergency food and the purchase of nutritional services for its hungry citizens. Pennsylvania allocated \$15 million this year, and it's going up to \$17 million.

I believe firmly--

New Jersey, also-- By the way, we did pass the Hunger Prevention bill, which allocated \$5 million. Out of that \$5 million, we have spent \$2.1 million on food. The problem with the HPA moneys is that they come from unspent TANF moneys. And as you all know, the State does not have unspent TANF moneys. And if they do, it's trying to figure out where it is and how to get to it. So we've had \$2.1 million of that allocated specifically for the purchase of food.

As you will hear today from the people here, we have come to rely on that food. When I go downstairs and I see how the food is in the food pantry, they will say to me, "This is the HPA food. And without the HPA food, we couldn't give out adequate packages this month." That--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: You need to tell us about what HPA stands--

MS. TOURETTE: Hunger Prevention Act.

First of all, that \$5 million has never been fully expended. Second of all, that money is a one-time allocation, and it's only for TANF-eligible people.

The State of New Jersey needs to recognize that it has an on-going problem with hunger, and it needs a specific allocation, every year, for the purchase of emergency food and for capital expenses incurred by the emergency food pantries. We have pantries that cannot get to a food bank, because they

have no van. We have pantries that have no freezer space. We have pantries that operate out of -- many of them are run out of faith-based agencies or faith-based organizations. They have -- they are out of church basements. They need shelving. Basic stuff for, really, basic -- to enable them to carry out the work that they do every day.

About 60 to 70 percent of emergency food pantries in New Jersey are run solely by volunteers. So, really, what we need is money for the purchase of food and for what it takes to get the food to our clients.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Are there questions for Adele?  
Assemblyman Fisher.

ASSEMBLYMAN FISHER: Just one.

When you talk about gathering up the food stuff, do you feel that the network has fully tapped the corporate side, in terms of getting your contributions of excess, short-coded foods?

MS. TOURETTE: You know what? I'm going to let the food bankers answer that, because they have a much better handle on that than I have. What I do is, I talk to the food pantries and soup kitchens, and I deal with policy and legislative issues related to hunger. So they would have a much better handle on exactly what the food donation situation is. So I will bow to their expertise.

ASSEMBLYMAN FISHER: Okay. I appreciate that.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Other questions for our guest?

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: I took note of the fact of -- maybe I shouldn't have been surprised -- that there are those who use your services of

quite high income. And how do you-- Do you think that there's a crowd-out effect that occurs, at all? Of course, there's always more people who need than we're able to provide for. But do you have-- Are there issues related-- Do you see a problem with the fact that there are people of high income accessing these services? And does it mean that someone who doesn't have a high income, who might be more needy, might be hungry for a longer period of time, nutritionally impaired, etc.? Do you see those kinds of things going on? Is that just a potentiality, or is it something that's real and occurring right now?

MS. TOURETTE: I think-- I have not seen it occur. I think what I see is that people in the community who provide these services, who volunteer their time and run these food pantries, are unbelievably dedicated and committed. And they will do anything. They have reached into their own pocket to make sure that every person who comes to their food pantry and says they are in need of food, and is referred, and they have a knowledge of their need, gets food. What they might do, in dire cases, is give them less food to make it go around. But I do not think that people who are-- If people are in need, they get served. So I don't think it's that kind of weighted.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Dr. Munoz.

ASSEMBLYMAN MUNOZ: I'm sorry. I had to leave the committee room for a second. I had something at the hospital.

Adele, first of all, I want to compliment you for doing, really, God's work. I do medicine, and you're doing God's work.

Do you work for an agency? I mean, tell me--

MS. TOURETTE: I do. I work for the Center for Food Action in New Jersey, which is based in Englewood. And the Center has five direct service

feeding sites; four in Bergen County, one in Passaic County. And they also have the Statewide Emergency Food and Anti-Hunger Network, of which I am Director.

And the Statewide Emergency Food and Anti-Hunger Network is, basically, a policy organization that talks to food pantries, finds out what the issues are, and then comes to policy tables and says, "This is what's going on out there in the community." And we also, at this point, are coordinating the New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition, of which many of the people here are members. And that's really trying to bring the providers together to talk about what it is they need on a long-term basis, and get the issue of hunger really out here to you guys so you know what's going on.

ASSEMBLYMAN MUNOZ: Does New Jersey have-- You know, the way I heard-- You were talking about Rutgers trying to, at least, get data. And you can look at health, or this or that, and there's generally a rating -- not that it's particularly accurate, but it says New Jersey's the best or the worst. Is there anything like that, that exists in this food--

MS. TOURETTE: In hunger?

ASSEMBLYMAN MUNOZ: Well, yes, this hunger -- whole area.

MS. TOURETTE: Well, there are food insecurity measurements. And, again, I think (indiscernible)-- The food insecurity numbers just came out federally. They were just released last week. I think-- Because we do an annual hunger survey. And, actually, it's part of the Rutgers' study that's coming up as a result of the Hunger Prevention Act. It's very hard to get information from the providers, because of the nature of the providers, because of their volunteer nature, and because what they are about -- simply out of necessity -- is food in,

food out. They focus on, if somebody shows up at their door, they want to get them food. So they're focused on getting enough food in, and then getting it out to their clients.

It's very hard to get solid, firm numbers. I mean, we get a percentage of increase, so we can say-- And they will tell you, 20 percent increases, 40 percent increases. It's really -- it's just gone off the charts, in terms of the numbers of people we're feeding. But in terms of real, hard figures, I can never say, "This is exactly the number."

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Adele, would you please give us the Web site where people that may be listening, or in the room, would like to know where they could look at a Web site to say, "Where in my neighborhood is there a food pantry, soup kitchen? And what are the needs that they might have?" Could you give us that information, please?

MS. TOURETTE: Absolutely. We have that on our Web site, which is *www.sefan.org*. And all you have to do is click on *Pantry Link*, and it has pantries in every county. And it will tell you exactly what their volunteer and donation needs are.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony.

MS. TOURETTE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Terry Kiely, the Mercer Street Friends, right here in Trenton.

Terry.

**TERRY KIELY:** Good afternoon.

I represent Mercer Street Friends, here in Trenton. We're the food bank for Mercer County.

I'm going to keep my comments short, because I know there's a lot of pantries here, and soup kitchens. And I certainly want to give them time -- some time to speak.

I think Adele covered a lot of my comments.

What I want to say to you, just to talk about increasing need, and what everyone was talking about -- numbers. Food banks distribute TEFAP, that's temporary assistance -- USDA commodities to all the pantries. We have to keep some numbers on those, and those are in the Department of Agriculture in New Jersey. So we can look at the request for commodities that are coming in every month and by year. And I keep track of those.

Just to give you an example, if you look at October 2000 up to now, the number of requests just in Mercer County increased 70 percent. So if I counted all the women and children who received commodities, it went up 70 percent.

And even before 9/11, we could see that the economy was having problems and floundering. We could tell that, because more people were showing up at pantries. So there are some numbers that you can access.

I want to reiterate that New Jersey needs to put some financial support to the food banks. We get a Federal contribution in the sense -- not so much money, but food, through the commodities program. We have our corporate donors, and we are constantly reaching out to them -- donors in the community. We don't really receive any State funding, whatsoever. And I can tell you, I look very jealously at the state of Pennsylvania and New York when

I see the kind of support that they provide their emergency food providers. And I submitted some written testimony and described, in a little more detail -- about the program in Pennsylvania, what it funds, and what needs it covers.

And I have to also reiterate that the Hunger Prevention food was wonderful. That funding's going to be up at the end of December. But we were able to go to the rescue missions, the soup kitchens, the pantries that are member agencies and say, "What do you need? What are the things that we don't get in sufficient amounts as donations?" It's primarily protein foods -- so the things that we put in our freezer.

Assemblyman Conaway, I know that you're a pediatrician.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: I'm an internist.

MS. KIELY: Oh, an internist. So you know a lot about pediatric medicine. But there is a report that came out, this year--

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: Enough to stay away from it.

MS. KIELY: --called SNAP. It's the child's nutrition sentinel program, that is a multi-city study, where they're looking at children coming to emergency rooms. And what they're seeing is, there are more kids coming in with nutrition-related problems. If you don't have adequate protein, your immune system doesn't function, you're more likely to pick up infection, you end up at the hospital.

They said the average cost of a child going to a hospital for a hospitalization is, I think, \$11,000. Just think how much food that could provide, food stamps, everything else. So by taking some preventative measures and making sure children have adequate nutrition, we might save some money, long-term.

Every time I think about that, I think about a client who came to me. She was HIV-positive. Her husband infected her. She was working. She had a 12-year-old. She was providing food to her child. But the reason she came to the pantry, that I was volunteering at, was because -- she said, "I know that feeding him macaroni and cheese all the time is not sufficient. He needs better nutrition."

So that Hunger Prevention money -- we use that to buy ground beef, ground turkey, chickens. Those kinds of things cannot be donated in a food drive. Food drives are, primarily, non-perishable foods.

So, definitely, we're asking -- maybe you could put some money in the budget that we can go out to support the emergency food providers.

Thank you for your time and your attention to this important issue.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Are there questions for our guest?

(no response)

Thank you so much.

Meara Nigro, the Community FoodBank of New Jersey, coming from Hillside.

**M E A R A N I G R O:** Good afternoon.

Before I begin my testimony, I just want to add one point. The Community FoodBank of New Jersey, a member of America's Second Harvest, did a study -- a hunger study with the Mathematica Policy Research a few years ago. And it revealed that 62 percent of the people who receive food through the agencies that get food from our food bank have incomes below the official poverty level of \$18,800 for a family of four. So I just wanted to clarify that,

because I know Adele mentioned that there's a wide range of incomes. But the vast majority of them are very poor.

The New Jersey food bank federation is made up of six regional, nonprofit food distribution organizations. The largest, the Community FoodBank of New Jersey, serves over 950 charitable programs from its Hillside headquarters and its Southern Branch, in Atlantic County. Through its association with the Food Bank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties in Neptune, the NORWESCAP Food Bank in Phillipsburg, and Mercer Street Friends Food Cooperative in Trenton, the Community FoodBank helps serve an additional 442 agencies in a total of 18 counties. The Food Bank of South Jersey, in Pennsauken, serves the remaining three counties. All together, the food bank federation serves an estimated 734,000 low-income people, more than half of whom are children and the frail elderly.

Food banks distribute food to emergency pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, low-income senior meal programs, daycare centers, after-school programs, group homes for the disabled, and shelters for battered women and their children. We don't serve needy families directly.

Twenty-five years ago, soup kitchens were for street people, not for mothers, children, and people with jobs, as they are today. When Kathleen DiChiara, the Founder and Executive Director of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey, started our food bank in the mid-1970s, hunger was usually a short-term crisis brought on by a fire or temporary job loss. Now, most of the people served by our member agencies are working-poor families and the elderly, who are forced, by economic necessity, to pay regular visits to local emergency

pantries. The tragedy is that low wages, high housing costs, and the lack of health insurance leave many families struggling to meet their most basic needs.

Managers of food pantries and soup kitchens who receive groceries from the food bank federation report that over the last four years, the number of people turning to them for help has increased from 5 percent to 40 percent annually, depending upon the location of the agencies.

Hard, cold numbers tell only a piece of the story. The Federal poverty level is \$18,800 for a family of four. A full-time job at today's minimum wage in New Jersey pays \$10,712 a year, well below the poverty level. And the minimum wage hasn't been raised since 1997. In the last three years, the number of New Jersey residents living below the Federal poverty level has increased more than 8 percent overall, and 18 percent among children, for a total of more than 703 (*sic*) people living, officially, in poverty.

But those figures, as sobering as they are, do not tell the whole story. Because the poverty rate is a national figure, and the cost of living in New Jersey, as we all know, is one of the highest in the nation, many New Jerseyans, who have incomes above the official poverty rate, still cannot meet their basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, day care, health care, and transportation. A better measure of the income level needed to meet those needs is the self-sufficiency standard, calculated by the Poverty Research Institute of Legal Services of New Jersey. The self-sufficiency standard takes into account where a family lives and how old their children are. In New Jersey, the average fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment, in 2003, was \$1,026 a month, which would require 153 hours of work per week at the minimum wage of \$5.15. The self-sufficiency standard, which measures the cost of meeting basic

needs in different locales, shows that, in New Jersey, a family of four needs \$41,056 for food, housing, utilities, clothing, public transportation, and child care.

Sharon Reilly-Tobin, Program Director for the Emergency Food and Nutrition Network of Catholic Community Services, in Essex County -- which is a Community FoodBank partner agency -- reports seeing more working people than ever before coming for food. Like many agency directors, she has observed that it's hard for people she serves to buy food, when their limited funds must go for escalating shelter costs, increased utility and fuel costs; child care; and health care, because their low-paying jobs don't have health insurance benefits. This is a trend food banks all over the country are reporting.

The larger number of working poor individuals and families, as well as the growing number of elderly, and even veterans, who are in line at food pantries and soup kitchens in New Jersey reflects a national increase in food insecurity. The United States Department of Agriculture reports that the number of households defined as *food insecure* has risen 15 percent since 1999, representing an additional 1.5 million households. Food insecurity means a household did not have daily access to nutritious food or did not have the ability, every day, to acquire foods in socially acceptable ways; that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other such coping strategies.

As the need for food rises, donations are not keeping pace. I know somebody had questioned whether the food industry was doing their part. The food industry is the largest source of donated food to food banks. But economic necessity has forced the manufacturers and retailers to be more cost-

effective, resulting in fewer instances of over-production, mislabeling, or other mistakes that led to large-scale donations in the past. Also, donated products tend to be what is available at any given time, not necessarily what you can make a nutritious meal out of. On the other hand, the Hunger Prevention Program enabled the food banks to purchase the most-needed items that are rarely donated, like meats and vegetables, and have them available to the pantries on a consistent basis so that they can do their meal planning.

Another major source of food for food banks, as Terry was saying, is The Emergency Food Assistance Program, otherwise known as TEFAP, run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We receive frozen and canned meats, vegetables, fruits, cereals, and grains, but, unfortunately, not in sufficient enough quantities to meet the growing need. Community food drives are a help, but they occur sporadically throughout the year and don't produce steady and predictable supplies of the most-needed items.

Increasingly, food banks must rely on their co-op purchased food programs. The Community FoodBank of New Jersey, for example, makes large wholesale purchases of the most needed items, such as frozen meats, vegetables, tuna fish, peanut butter, and fresh eggs, and then passes the savings on to the charities. However, many of the charities serving some of New Jersey's most impoverished areas do not have the funds to participate in the co-op program. We need to address this inequity.

In conclusion, adults cannot work to the best of their ability, and children cannot grow, thrive, and do well in school if they don't have enough to eat. New Jersey is the most affluent state in the richest country in the world, but there is a large and growing segment of our population that has been left behind.

We can all agree hunger is a bipartisan issue. Until our nation does a better job of addressing the root causes of poverty and hunger, food banks have an essential role to play in making sure that the most basic human need for food is met. Our strength as food banks has been our ability to put together diverse partnerships with manufacturers, retailers, brokers, a broad range of agencies serving the poor, and a large corps of dedicated volunteers. The private sector has done, and will continue to do, their part. We call upon the State to join us by making funds available for the purchase of food, as was first suggested in 1986 by Governor Kean's Commission on Hunger.

We thank the Assembly Committee members for hearing our testimony today, and we look forward to working with you to address the issue of hunger in New Jersey.

And I would just like to call your attention to the last page of my testimony that lists some recent hunger and poverty figures. Some are national, and some also just apply to New Jersey.

Thank you.

Does anybody have questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Are there questions for our guest?

ASSEMBLYMAN FISHER: I have a question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Assemblyman Fisher.

ASSEMBLYMAN FISHER: Thank you.

Thank you for all the work that you do and for wonderfully serving those that are in need.

Is there a Federal formula-- I mean, I recognize that everyone is here today for one reason -- is to see if there's going to be funds made available,

through the State budget, that have not been made these last several years, on an on-going basis.

The other side I'm going to ask, additionally, is, some of these sources where you are able to obtain food stuff. And one of them is, you mention that the Department of AG has Federal commodities that you can avail yourself to. Is there a formula, that each state gets, as to how that works out? For instance, we're the richest state in the union. And it scares me, because it makes me think that, maybe, we get less because the state is so wealthy. Are we aware of any kind of--

MS. NIGRO: That I don't know.

Does anybody else know the answer to that? (no response)

I can find out for you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Do we have Kathy--

Can you answer that for us?

Maybe we should bring-- Let's bring Kathy Kuser, from the Department of Agriculture, who is our -- as I say -- the main lady and CEO on the State level for many of these issues.

Kathy Kuser, we welcome you. And maybe you have some-- Maybe you should just sit right there so that after each person testifies, we can go to you and say, "Now, speak up."

**KATHY KUSER:** Good afternoon.

Yes, it's based on an allocation that the Federal government figures out. And it's an allocation formula used -- based on a weighted index, which combines the number of persons in each state below the poverty level of 60

percent, and the number of persons unemployed -- 40 percent -- as percentages of national totals. So that's how New Jersey's allocation is figured out.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: And that translates to what?

ASSEMBLYMAN FISHER: Yes, how does that translate, in terms of-- For instance, where are we in the ranking of-- How many pounds of food do we get from the Federal government, based on this formula, as opposed to some other state -- the poorest state?

MS. KUSER: Each year it would change, based on those numbers of individuals eligible, based on that formula that I just said.

Whatever USDA allocates to us, and any bonus foods that are available -- we take everything we can get our hands on to distribute to our various locations, to our neediest citizens.

We do get a million dollars from the Federal government to handle warehousing and transportation-related costs. But that is all we get. We have also asked the Federal government for additional funding. We have not received any. And every year we've asked for it.

ASSEMBLYMAN FISHER: Does the Federal government-- I mean, there are stockpiles of these foods.

MS. KUSER: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN FISHER: Do we know, for instance, at any given time, how extensive that is -- based on the amount of warehoused food versus the amount that they allocate each year -- what that percentage would be? Do you have any idea? For instance, if there's a million pounds in warehouses, and every year 20,000 pounds go out-- I know that's a silly example. But is there another formula for that, as well? For instance, if people are beginning to fall

below the poverty lines -- the poverty levels, and we're seeing increased amounts of need and for usage-- Is there a formula based on how much they have in the pipeline, and they can open the gates one year and they pull them back another year? Or am I way beyond--

MS. KUSER: What happens is, USDA will put into the pipeline what's called *bonus foods*, and bonus foods will be put in there to help alleviate the task of feeding additional individuals. But with that bonus food, there is no administrative dollars from USDA associated with it, which puts the burden back on the State, which, in turn, puts the burden back on the EFOs, who now have to deal with asserting every pound of food they have with a set price of \$.08 a pound, which is what it's been for the last 11 years.

ASSEMBLYMAN FISHER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Assemblyman Munoz.

ASSEMBLYMAN MUNOZ: I'm going to just jump in and comment. The fact that our per capita income is so high, compared to the rest of the United States of America, works against us a million times. Just take, for example, we pay \$60 billion in Federal taxes, irregardless of who's President of the United States, and \$30 billion comes back. So if you compare us to Louisiana, for example, we take a lot of hits in a lot of different ways. But that's a general answer to the problem where a lot of these people are needy and, unfortunately, we can't give them what they need, exactly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Assemblyman Conaway.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: Two questions.

One, are you aware of whether or not the Federal government exhausts all of the foods it keeps for emergencies? Does it fill this thing up

annually and distribute all of it annually? Does it save it for -- I don't know, getting five hurricanes, or some attack, or something like that? Do they always keep some large reserve, or do they basically spend down -- or distribute down to near-zero, or 10 percent, or whatever, and they fill it back up every year? I mean, are they sitting there with capacity that is not going into people's stomachs?

MS. KUSER: There's always some food available at the Federal level, yes. But I do believe, because they have to pay for storage costs, as well, they want to put that back into the states to get that to the neediest citizens.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: So they have an incentive not to hold on to these.

MS. KUSER: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: In the testimony that we've had, it was mentioned that the community food banks will do bulk purchasing. Of course, they're large, but the State of New Jersey is even larger. And I don't know-- I was just sitting here thinking. Does the State of New Jersey do any of this kind of bulk purchasing, using its purchasing power in the market place to drive down prices and help distribute -- with limited dollars, distribute more food to people in need? Does the State of New Jersey get into that at all, or is it all sort of done by the community food bank by itself, as a smaller entity, obviously, than the State government? Or does, somehow-- Or, alternatively, does the State help the community food bank in its own co-op program?

MS. KUSER: We basically help them with their own individual programs. We do purchase as much fresh fruits and vegetables that we possibly

can, with the limited dollars that we have. But we don't have a lot of leeway to do that with.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: Statutory leeway, or just because there's not enough money--

MS. KUSER: Dollar-wise.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: --dollar-wise, in your budget?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you very much.

You just stay right there, Ms. Kathy Kuser. Do not move one single muscle.

MS. KUSER: I wouldn't think of going anywhere.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: I know you're not going to move. Just stay right there, because I'm sure we're going to have questions for you.

Karen Talarico. This is coming into my county -- the Cathedral Kitchen, in Camden.

We welcome you.

And we appreciate the good work all of you guests are providing to the hungry in our state.

Thank you.

**KAREN TALARICO:** Thank you.

Hi, Mary. How are you?

Good afternoon, everyone.

As Mary said, my name is Karen Talarico, and I'm the Executive Director of the Cathedral Kitchen, in Camden, which is the biggest soup kitchen, if you will, in Camden. We like to refer to it as an emergency food

program. We currently serve over 7,000 meals a month, in Camden. And that's only serving one meal a day, five nights a week.

The Cathedral Kitchen was founded by volunteers in 1976, and for the last 28 years it's been providing food for the poor of the city.

As I said, we operate five days a week. We try to offer a nutritionally balanced, hot meal to everyone who comes to our door. The meals are prepared fresh, daily, by a small staff, and served by volunteers. We have over 500 people who volunteer on an annual basis at the kitchen, to help us serve dinner. Our meals are served at 4:00 p.m., and people start to line up on Federal Street, outside of our door, at 3:00 to make sure that they can get a seat in the Kitchen for a meal.

You might wonder who comes to a soup kitchen for dinner. Our dinner guests at the Kitchen are homeless, they're unemployed, they're the working poor. They're people who suffer from disabilities like drug addiction, and physical and mental infirmities. They range in age from infants to the elderly. We have a lot of families who come to the Kitchen anymore, and women with children, particularly at the end of the month, when they need somehow to stretch their budget a little further. They depend on the Kitchen then for meals. Everyone who comes to the Kitchen has one thing in common, though, in our area. It's poverty. As most of you know, Camden is one of the poorest cities in the United States. Over 35 percent of the population of Camden lives below the Federal poverty line. These are the people who rely on the Cathedral Kitchen for meals.

Recently, we conducted a survey of our clients to try to get to know them better and to know what their needs were. It was sort of interesting to us

to see that some of the things that we thought were confirmed. We knew that we had about 5 to 10 percent of our population that were children below the age of 18. That number fluctuates, because in the summer we see lots more children, because school lunch and breakfast programs are no longer there for them.

About 15 percent of our population are elderly people, people over the age of 60. This is a growing segment of our population. We see more and more elderly people coming into the Kitchen. Thirty percent of our people are homeless, which we expected. But almost 30 percent of our people are people who work full- or part-time, but do not make enough money to keep food on the table for themselves and their families. Thirty-three percent of the people who come to the Kitchen receive Food Stamps. And almost half of them said that the Food Stamps don't last beyond the first two weeks of the month.

We've seen a dramatic increase in the number of people who come to the Kitchen for meals. From 2002 to 2003, our numbers went up by 25 percent, from 47,000 meals to 65,000 meals. So far this year -- the first three-quarters of the year -- we served 56,000 meals. So we're showing an increase of 18 percent over last year.

Sometimes, at the end of the month, we don't know where the people come from. I've already been in the Kitchen slapping together sandwiches, because we're running out of food, because over 400 hundred people have shown up on a given night looking for a meal. Finding enough food for our program is a constant challenge. Because, on a busy evening, we need at least 100 pounds of chicken or 400 hamburgers, just to make sure that everybody gets one piece of meat.

One of our goals at the Kitchen is to provide a nutritious meal for our guests. Most of our guests don't have access to enough food to have a healthy diet, so we try to plan a nutritious meal. That means that they need to have some form of protein in that meal. And as some of the other people who have testified so far today have told you, this is one of the most difficult items to get from our food banks.

Our local food bank, which is the Food Bank of South Jersey, usually gives us a list of available products. It can run to five or six single-spaced pages. And yet, of those five or six pages, maybe five or six items will be protein items, and never in the quantity that we need at the Kitchen to put together a meal.

Three whole pages of that list is usually snack food items: cakes, candies, pies, potato chips, things that aren't nutritious and things that we already get delivered directly to the Kitchen by local retail outlets, because they're going off date, and so they have to get rid of them somehow. We don't need that kind of food. What we need is nutritious food for our guests. In fact, when we did our survey, one of the things that the people said they'd like to see more of were fresh fruits, salads, and fresh vegetables.

So, to get the kind of food we need for our meals, we have to go to outside vendors, just like a restaurant. We're fortunate, at the Kitchen, that we participate in a FEMA grant, a Federal Emergency Management Grant, to help cover some of our food purchases. But so far this year, we've had to spend \$45,000 on food.

And while food is a big concern for us, like many of the food providers, our facility is woefully inadequate for a program like ours. Our chef

cooks in a kitchen that has one, four-burner electric range that, until recently-- It was 50 years old, but we just replaced it with a 20-year-old one, and one commercial convection oven. We have no walk-in refrigerator, we have no walk-in freezer. We've had to turn down food donations because we don't have storage space for it.

For years, we've been trying to find a new location for our program. What we'd like to do is build a new facility, where we can serve people every day of the week, where we can serve lunch during the summer for children in a children's lunch program, or we can teach people how to work in a kitchen with a culinary arts program.

So, for years, we've struggled trying to find a good location, and it has not been made any easier by the redevelopment that's currently going on in Camden. But we have located a site, and it's got the blessing of the city and the redevelopment authority. But now we face the uphill struggle of raising enough money to build that building. Like the other emergency food providers, it's a struggle just to find the money to provide the food for our program and to pay the staff that's there to cook it.

A capital campaign for us is, really, an enormous challenge. Most of the capital-- There's capital funds in budgets like the HUD program. It doesn't cover emergency services. It always goes to housing services. Capital funds for support services like meals -- it's practically nonexistent. There's no HUD funds for it. There are no Agriculture or Health and Human Services funds. Likewise, most of the State funds that support homeless and poor go to housing. They don't go to food.

We haven't had to cut back our hours or our service yet at the Kitchen. But as I've said, we have seen such a tremendous increase in demand for our services that we worry that, someday, we're going to have to shut that big, red door that everybody looks forward to opening in the evening.

We don't want to run out of food. We don't want to have to say to that woman that was crying one day outside our door that-- She had no food in her house, but she was too embarrassed to have to come and eat at a soup kitchen. We don't want to have to say to that woman, "There's no place for you at our table." We like to say that there's a place for everybody at our table. But it's getting harder and harder to find the food to make sure that the plate is full.

We hope that we can count on our legislators to recognize that this problem of hunger in New Jersey is real and it's growing. And we'd like to try to help you come up with a solution that will help us and help the people that we serve.

Thank you very much for having me here this afternoon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Are there questions for Ms. Talarico? (no response)

Well, I have one.

MS. TALARICO: Certainly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Would you tell me, again, who funds the Cathedral Kitchen?

MS. TALARICO: Yes. The Cathedral Kitchen-- Our budget, which is about \$250,000 a year, comes half from a combination of State grants, local grants, the FEMA grants that I spoke of, grants that we solicit from private

foundations. The other half is funded by individuals. The Cathedral Kitchen is very lucky to have a very broad range of support throughout South Jersey, and we have people who donate -- it's small sums of money. It's like \$3 in an envelope every month from some people, but they're very dedicated to the Kitchen. So we're fortunate in that way, but as I said, as our program -- just the demand for it skyrockets, we scramble to come up with enough money to put food on the table.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: I know the Girl Scout troop in my youth center has occasionally used that as a project -- for sending little bags of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to the Cathedral Kitchen.

MS. TALARICO: That's right. And they provided Thanksgiving centerpieces this year for us for our celebration.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you very much for your testimony.

MS. TALARICO: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: You know, I have a question out to everybody, generally speaking -- just a springboard from the testimony of Ms. Talarico. Are there others of you that see the same phenomenon of a huge rush of children, when the school breakfast/lunch programs disappear during the school year? I see heads nodding all around. Put your hands up, let's see. Oh, everybody.

So we've got a significant problem. When the school lunch and breakfast programs disappear, then there's extra pressure on the soup kitchens or the pantries.

And isn't it a sin and a shame that we have districts in the state that are still trying to avoid implementing the school breakfast? We should bow our heads in shame.

Patricia Apgar, of the NORWESCAP Food Bank.

**PATRICIA APGAR:** Good afternoon.

My name is Patricia Apgar, from the NORWESCAP Food Bank, in Phillipsburg, New Jersey.

The NORWESCAP Food Bank is a subsidiary distributing organization of the Community Food Bank of Hillside. We are also affiliated, through the Food Bank, with America's Second Harvest.

Our food bank was established in 1985. Acting as a clearinghouse, the food bank annually distributes 1.7 million pounds of food to 130 nonprofit charities in Sussex, Warren, and Hunterdon counties, who feed the needy and those at risk. These charities include soup kitchens, shelters, pantries, and on-site feeding programs, adult and children's daycare centers.

A majority of food distributed is donated through America's Second Harvest and from major food manufacturers. These donations include overages, USDA foods, and private and corporate donations, including canned-food drives.

The NORWESCAP Food Bank continues to see an increase in need. Many individuals and families have to decide between paying the rent, purchasing food, or paying for medicine.

In addition, with the increase in the cost of fuel, many families have less to spend on food and are turning to local food pantries and soup kitchens, who, in turn, turn to the food bank for more food.

With the increasing demand of food from our charities, the NORWESCAP Food Bank is having difficulty keeping up with the demand. While we continue to seek out community donations from schools, civic groups, and the business community, we cannot supply our charities with an adequate supply of nutritional food.

In addition, we face the loss of the New Jersey Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance funds for our food bank. That was \$75,000. With that, we purchased all protein and nutritious foods. And it will have an impact on providing food to families with children.

The NORWESCAP Food Bank has also experienced an increase in the need from the senior population who are not eligible for assistance through the Hunger Prevention program.

The NORWESCAP Food Bank works with grocery reclamation centers to recover damaged packaged and canned foods that have been taken off of supermarket shelves. This product continues to decrease and is often unavailable. The product, which was once solely donated to food banks, is now being sold to secondary markets for resale to the public at a reduced rate. We've established a produce program and a venison program.

This past year, we distributed, I believe, close to 100,000 pounds of fresh produce. We have a community garden in the back of our food bank, and have worked with Hunters Helping the Hungry and distributed almost 50,000 pounds of venison. We continue to seek additional resources to provide food for the ever-increasing need.

I've been with the Food Bank for 14 years. It gets harder every day. I am a resident of Hunterdon County. I grew up in Bethlehem Township, in

Hunterdon County, and now reside in Holland Township, in Hunterdon County.

We had a new neighbor move in, probably about two years ago, and when I told him that I worked at a food bank, he said to me, "A food bank? What is with people needing food? Everybody can get a job. Why do we have to do this?" And I explained to him-- And he became a very good neighbor. But I don't think he truly understood what I do every day. About a year ago, this man was stricken with an inoperable brain tumor and had to leave his job. He was a heavy construction operator. He could no longer work, and his wife stood by his side, left her job to stay home to take care of him. These are people just like you and I, people who go to work every day, people who have raised our family, who own a home, but they had no income. I brought food to him from the Food Bank. So it's a mixed population.

I received a letter last week from a lady. We had done a direct-mail solicitation asking for money to help with holiday foods. The lady wrote me back, and she said, "I'm so glad to get your solicitation. I cannot give you anything, and I hope you can give me some help. My husband has diabetes. I have lost my job of 20 years. We are losing our house. We are filing Chapter 13. But if I can hold on, our mortgage payment is only \$400-and-some-odd. That's less than anything I will pay anywhere else. Can you direct me? Can you tell me -- where can we go to get what we need?" And, of course, I responded to her.

So there are many different situations. There are many reasons people need food. I chose a long time ago not to judge people. But what we do need is help. We have sought -- and everyone here that has spoke today can tell

you the same thing. We've turned over every stone. We need a regular allotment that we know we can count on to purchase nutritious food for our community.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you so much.

Have we questions?

Chairman Smith.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: I just have a nutritional question for the two physicians on the panel and then, perhaps, a question for you.

Herb.

My question to each of the two physicians on this panel--

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: You're not asking me because I'm well fed, are you? (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: No.

Is it safe to say that the optimal amount of protein for a growing child, or an adult, or even a senior citizen would be about a half a gram of protein for every pound of body weight? Is that a safe assumption?

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: I don't know about that. Elementary diets -- I haven't had to do that in a while.

But I can say that it's supposed to be--

ASSEMBLYMAN MUNOZ: Yes, doctor.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: Well, I don't do diet plans.

But I would say this. The target is to have the protein component of your overall diet be somewhere between -- depending on who you talk to -- 20 and 30 percent of your diet. But what that works out to on a per kilogram

basis, I don't know. But there are standards that are -- and targets for that. But to the-- Again, on a per kilogram basis, I can't give you-- You're asking me a question I don't know--

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Okay. Let's assume that it is a half a gram per pound of body weight for an individual. So you have a 150-pound 15-year-old kid, let's say, for example. Then, optimally, that kid should be consuming about 75 grams of protein.

My second question to each of the doctors is: I understand that it's difficult with perishable foods like ground beef, or steak, or turkey, or chicken, when you're dealing with a soup kitchen or some type of volunteer distribution center-- While this is not optimal -- but can you replace that protein necessary to sustain health with soy drinks, whey protein drinks? And, certainly, you would not want to do that with all of your protein intake, but at least supplement it? Is that fair to say?

MS. APGAR: They're also very expensive.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Yes, I understand.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: Well, people do make those substitutions all the time. I mean, vegetarians do that all the time.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: So it's okay then. Protein supplements are okay to kind of make up the difference.

ASSEMBLYMAN MUNOZ: Let me just -- couple of comments.

First of all, good questions.

One is, in the United States, whether it be in low-income areas or in middle class -- has kind of an obesity epidemic, myself included. And when you go to, really-- One of the people who were testifying said you should be

eating chicken instead of eating Cheetos -- all food they're getting. And, you know, I work in Newark. You see that.

So one is to have, as you're saying, nutritious food. And then the second thing is to deal with the economics of, I guess, giving chicken -- frozen, fresh -- or vegetables. I guess that is more expensive -- that people want to dump a truckload of Cheetos on your-- They could be a help. I mean, they're not of *not* help--

But any of you who have worked in the third world know that in really poor countries, you are real skinny if you don't have any money. And obesity is different. But in the United States, it's actually a little bit different. But we do need protein. I think you can substitute, but it costs money.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: My thought is that-- I know the supplements that you purchase, whether it be whey protein or soy protein, are fairly expensive. But I don't think soy protein would be nearly as expensive as what people might think, if it were purchased in bulk. Because soy, I don't think, is a very expensive protein, if you compare it to beef, or chicken, or buffalo; or fish, depending on the fish.

So my question, I guess -- let's put aside price. When you're dealing with the problems of foods perishing, and shelf life that you have with fish or meats, could you, do you think, economically benefit from protein supplements, whether it be soy or whey?

MS. APGAR: We have distributed, actually in our purchase co-op programs, some textured vegetable protein. And I don't know if you're familiar with that. It's a dry product that you can put in spaghetti sauce, as it looks

kind of like ground beef then. And you can make other items with it. And, actually, we have just started doing that.

But, also, not only chicken, and beef, and whatnot, we are doing canned meats, canned tuna, eggs. It's not all ground beef and items like that that we're distributing. And, of course, we have the venison, that we have really worked hard on.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: What I'm also hearing today, as I've heard from meeting with a number of you before, a lot of you don't have the refrigerators anyway, or the burners to cook the food anyway.

MS. APGAR: If the food banks do have them. Many of the agencies do not have them, and cannot handle 50 gallons of milk at one time. So, again, we do result (*sic*) to the dry milk on that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you very much for your testimony.

Oh, sorry, go ahead Assemblyman Guy Gregg.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: Thank you.

I'm not sure if the right people are up here for the questions that I have. But we are kind of going off the agenda a little bit.

I have a couple of just quick questions on dollars.

And I do want to ask you a question, as well, depending on having the right answer from the other folks.

How much money does the State of New Jersey expend, or do you receive, from the Federal government on emergency foods? Can somebody answer that -- on a yearly basis?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Kathy Kuser might be able to help us. She's our main lady.

MS. KUSER: One million dollars.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: One million. That's what I thought I heard.

MS. KUSER: And 338 in State money.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: Three hundred thirty--

MS. KUSER: Thirty-eight.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: Thousand?

MS. KUSER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: Does that include all grants and all other moneys that might come?

MS. KUSER: That is everything.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: So the complete contribution of the State of New Jersey, towards emergency food--

MS. KUSER: Is 338,000.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: --\$338,000. Well, that answers my first question. Pretty easy.

Virtually everything else is coming either from the public sector or from public donations.

MS. KUSER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: Whatever that number is.

MS. KUSER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: We have had a lot of discussion on quality and quantity of food today. It seems like the problem -- one of the

biggest problems is the actual quality, not necessarily quantity. You may have too much of one thing, and that's not helping you, from a nutritional standpoint. So you need to focus on getting towards the quality balance that you need to have.

If the State, for argument's sake, was just going to write you a check, who and where would you purchase this food from?

MS. APGAR: We would purchase it cooperatively through the -- as far as the food banks -- cooperatively purchase it in a bulk purchase. We would not be going to the corner store to buy it, whatever. We would buy it by the truckload.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: But from who?

MS. APGAR: From purveyors.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: Would you bid it out? I'm honestly asking these questions. I mean, suddenly you could get a huge infusement of dollars. For argument's sake, let's say the State got overly generous and said, "We're going to give you \$10 million next year." So now you've got \$10 million to spend.

MS. APGAR: I'd have no problem with that. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: I sensed that you wouldn't.

MS. APGAR: Well, actually, I work for NORWESCAP--

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: Keep in mind, this is hypothetical.

MS. APGAR: At NORWESCAP, we bid out everything. So I would have no problem--

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: So, in essence, you would bid it out, and the State would figure out how to give it out. But, in essence, you would go to certain big sellers of the product.

MS. APGAR: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: I'm thinking, as I'm listening to all these questions, about--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: We were hoping that we had someone from the Budget Committee -- that there would be some ideas that would filter back to you, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: Ah, yes. Well, I don't sit on it anymore, but thanks for all those years. Now they make me do other things, like substitute for everybody else. And I'm happy to do that, because it's always a learning experience. I appreciate the opportunity.

As I'm listening to some of your problems -- and, obviously, I can sense the goal here is to say we should get some money directly -- always from the State. That's what everybody wishes, because it keeps a consistency to your program. And I'm sensitive to that.

But I'm also thinking about some of the things that we do to make things not easy for people. And it appears that everybody's been fairly complimentary towards the private sector and their contributions -- the supermarkets, or the food council, or people of that nature. And the agricultural community's been trying to do what they can. But it's somewhat disjointed and doesn't, necessarily, bring you exactly what you need. And you get caught with having to store things you may not need, and then not having the equipment to store it in, and all the litany of things we just heard.

I just wonder, as you move forward, Madam Chair, that certainly the Budget and Appropriations Committees will have to look at these issues.

Since you have a motivated private sector -- that to motivate them even more, or make it easy for them -- maybe even better than buying from them. Because one way or the another, they're going to get the money, if you know what I mean, because you're going to go buy it from them if we give you the money. So if they're so motivated to be more generous, more accurately, that that might be even more beneficial, because they're getting something back, not just wondering if they're going to get the bid.

For example, if you were to have a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for contributions of high protein foods, as opposed to the charitable contribution you get for the Fritos, that you may be able to motivate them -- clearly you have certain shelf lives on certain high protein foods -- things like hamburger. We've extended shelf life on products like that dramatically over the last 20 years. I'm a food person by background. I've been in the restaurant industry for 27 years. So I mean, we've invented CryoMax, and we've improved upon that. And in many ways, we can keep a product longer than we used to be able to, which would obviously help you. I'm sure you use all of those products now.

MS. APGAR: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: You might even have-- It would be wonderful for you to have one of those machines, for argument's sake, so you could actually do it yourself.

MS. APGAR: I have one in my home.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG: There you go.

So I think, sometimes we look at just writing checks -- where if we were to really-- And when I say a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for folks-- I mean, business people's eyes open up, because that's not what my tax rate is. That means I get that dollar directly back for giving away meats, and fishes, and vegetable products.

And I say the same thing about equipment -- that we should look at. Because so many businesses in the food business improve and redo their places. So many restaurants redo their places. When I hear you tell me you don't have a walk-in -- I could have gotten you a walk-in two months ago. You might have had to pick it up, but it would have been there. Many businesses do that. And, again, you need to give them an incentive that's greater than just a donation of your car to charity. You might have to increase the value of that donation. Not for the face value of it, but certainly the used value of it, the dollar-for-dollar tax credit. I can't imagine why a food bank couldn't have ovens tomorrow. And I can't tell you I can guarantee that, but certainly there are manufacturing companies that know that they're redoing certain operations, going into catering operations, redoing, rebuilding. The equipment may be 15 years old, but in that business, the equipment has an unlimited shelf life. If it's maintained, stainless steel lasts just a little bit shorter than uranium. I mean, it's very indestructible. And it comes right back again, whether it's tables and things of that nature, with a new compressor and a cooler.

And I'm sorry to go rambling on. But I think that while you can look at budgetary gifts in a line item in the budget, a gift of great incentives -- very focused to your specific needs-- Keeping the same people in the same pipeline you're using but telling that one person that was giving you X, Y, and

Z that now they're going to give you A, B, and C, because it's really profitable for them. It's not just they're doing you a favor, they're actually doing a positive service to their stockholders and positive service to their business, in general.

So I leave that with -- a thought, as you move forward in testimony.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Sounds like a great idea, Assemblyman.

MS. APGAR: Well-- And I would also like to speak on what we have in our food bank, as far as equipment that we use every day. I would be willing to tell you that 95 percent of what we have belonged to someone else before it was ours, and has been donated. We buy very, very little -- from our office furniture to refrigeration. We just picked up a refrigeration unit in Flemington last week. So we do try to make more with less.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you very much.

A slightly different direction in what we've been hearing so far -- an after-school program, Pastor Everett Upton, from Elizabeth.

Pastor Upton.

**PASTOR EVERETT UPTON:** Good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: We welcome you.

PASTOR UPTON: I thank you for having the opportunity to share.

I come from a little different angle, but probably very similar. I deal with quite a few children. We have, I would say, probably about 150 to

200 children that we minister to in the course of the year. And we have a zero pregnancy, zero incarceration--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: We need you to do something with the -- push the button for the microphone so we can hear what you're saying.

PASTOR UPTON: I'm sorry. Can you hear me now?

MS. LEBLANC: The red button has to be on.

PASTOR UPTON: Is that better?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: That's much better.

PASTOR UPTON: And I have to put on my preaching voice, right?

As I was saying, we have a few hundred children that we work with. And we have a zero pregnancy, zero incarceration, zero drop-out rate of the children that we have. And we do this by quite a few means, but one of the main things that is specific to what we're talking about today is that we have quite a few children that come to our after-school program, not just for the help, as far as their homework or the activities that we have, but many times just to eat. They have, sometimes, breakfast in school, or lunch. But to get a good nutritious meal--

In the community that I deal with, Oodles of Noodles, many times, is the meal; Chinese food, pizza, fried this, fried that, fried everything-- And very rarely do they get fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, or anything like that. My wife is a chef by profession, and sometimes she'll go and she'll pick up all these odd things like mangos, and avocados, and things like that. And once a week, we have a -- I guess you would say -- nutrition day, where she'll bring in unusual things that they might not be accustomed to, which might be normal for us.

It's interesting. Some of the comments you get are, "Those are the things we don't get a chance to get," or "Those are the things--" You'd be surprised how many children have never experienced tasting just some of those unusual fruits, or some things that we normally take for granted.

The food bank has been a blessing to us, because we've been able to buy more than we normally would be able to in a supermarket. But in addition to that, we're the only Kid's Cafe site in Union County. That gives us the privilege of being able to receive a certain food allotment so that these children would have a hot meal.

But the problem that we're finding is that we're getting more children, and the children are older. And we even find that quite a few of the parents, as we try to talk to them and try to minister to them -- because we have a parenting component, as well -- that many of them, even the working ones, are working, but the jobs aren't paying as much. So when they're stretching-- And I heard quite a few people say the same thing. When they're stretching their budgets, there's just no -- where do you stretch it any more? Do you keep your lights on? And if you don't have lights, when can you cook? You have to go out and get fast food. If you eliminate your rent, or pay it late, or whatever the case may be, then the next thing you know is you're moving from place to place.

So any help would be great. The children would love to have some fresh things and nutritious things.

I thought the idea that you mentioned, the dollar-for-dollar, sounds like an excellent idea. But I know with the program that we have -- we have 100 percent volunteers in our program. No one is staff. We have, for all practical purposes, zero funding. We've made attempts to get funding. We've

made attempts to get grants, and things like that. But some of that takes staffing. And many times, if you don't have the seed or that staffing financial component -- because not too many people want to do that for free -- you can't tap into the sources. And many of the funding sources that we've heard about, and No Child Left Behind, and many of the other things, sometimes it seems like smoke to some of the smaller components like ours, because you go to reach for things and you can't find them anywhere. Or it takes a certain type of professional to be able to tap into those types of funds.

So my prayer, and my congregation's prayer, and the children's prayer is that any help that would come would be great. We're looking forward -- and we have a staff of people that are looking forward to doing anything they can do for the kids. They're willing to give their time, after a hard day. I find that most of our volunteers are people that are even limited with their education. Many of them know what it's like to be either hungry or not to have, in one way or another. And that's the reason why they give. Some of the staff that we've had, that were teachers or whatever the case may be -- sometimes if we weren't able to give a stipend, then you don't see them anymore.

So any help would help. Whenever you have someone that's volunteering their time, and they're not asking anything for it, I think that we should do all that we can do to help people like that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: I have a question for you. We met earlier today with Kathy Kuser, who is our expert on various federally subsidized food programs.

How did you hear about the after-school program, to make yourself eligible?

PASTOR UPTON: The after-school program-- When you said how did we hear about it--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Are you funded at all by the after-school Federal moneys, or you just do it on your own?

PASTOR UPTON: We have done it on our own.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Oh, well then--

PASTOR UPTON: And we've made a relationship with the food bank, which has tapped us into being able to participate in the food that we receive, which, I guess, a portion of it would be State funded.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Well, you know what? I need you to get acquainted with this lady right here, because she is the main lady about the federally funded after-school snack program, which New Jersey does not have a strong showing, unfortunately. And we're working on trying to find out ways of expanding that in communities that are eligible. And I have no doubt--

You're Elizabeth, right?

PASTOR UPTON: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: I have absolutely no doubt that you're eligible. So you better give your card to Ms. Kuser, the lady right over here. And she probably will help you.

You put him down on your list to train him, so maybe he could get some of this money.

MS. KUSER: He's here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: You got it down, right?

MS. KUSER: I got it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: She's going to be in touch with you, Reverend.

PASTOR UPTON: Okay. That sounds great.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Do we have some other questions?

Yes, Assemblyman Dancer.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. For the Pastor--

Well, actually, first to Kathy.

When Guy was asking about the funding-- And I think I heard you say \$338,000 is the Department of Agriculture funding from the State.

MS. KUSER: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Okay.

A program that I personally have interest in is the Farmers Against Hunger.

MS. KUSER: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Is that program still being funded?

MS. KUSER: Absolutely. Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Okay. And that was approximately \$50,000.

MS. KUSER: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: To the Pastor-- Farmers Against Hunger: This is a program that incorporates the biblical principal of gleaning. That is the principal that we read about -- a wonderful account in the Book of Ruth -- where in gleaning, there are students that will come to the farms, and

whatever the-- After the harvest, there are crops that are left there in the field. And that is then gathered and utilized to meet the needs of the hungry. It's a great Judeo-Christian biblical principal. And even if we can't be politically correct, we certainly, I think, have a moral obligation to be biblically correct.

Can you tell me if you've had any experience, or were you knowledgeable of the gleaning program, perhaps, through some of the farmers? That's why, when the Chairwoman was saying about putting the two together--

PASTOR UPTON: Personally, I'm not familiar with it. I know that the children have participated in some voluntary efforts to do some things. And it wasn't always with something they came -- from them participating. But, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Okay. Just a comment then. I would suggest that the faith-based organizations and--

Kathy, perhaps you are-- Are you doing it now? I don't know. Are you doing an outreach to the faith-based organizations, within our state, to assist with the Farmers Against Hunger?

MS. KUSER: There's going to be a whole program on December 2, up at Rutgers, that we're going to be participating in. It's a faith-based initiative. And we also did one in Atlantic City, basically getting outreach information about all the programs that are available through the State, through the Department of Agriculture that are federally funded.

PASTOR UPTON: Yes, the December 2 -- I did receive information on that.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Great.

PASTOR UPTON: So I am aware of the December 2.

ASSEMBLYMAN DANCER: Okay.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: Madam Chair, I have a question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Questions for Kathy Kuser?

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: She's got an answer in the back.

**H O P E H O L L A N D:** Hello.

My name is Hope Holland, and I work with Kathy Kuser.

HEARING REPORTER: Madam Chair--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: You're going to have to come up until we hear you on the microphone. And you will identify yourself.

Another of our specialists from the Department of Agriculture.

MS. HOLLAND: Hello.

My name is Hope Holland. I work with the Emergency Food Assistance Program at the Department of Agriculture.

I just wanted to mention that the faith-based organization conference date has been changed. I received an e-mail this morning that it's now being held on January 11, up at New Brunswick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Well, I hope they'll get that information out to everybody so that you don't have a huge crowd on December 2.

MS. HOLLAND: Yes. Actually, Ed Laporte, who works for the State Department and faith-based organization program, has circulated an announcement, through e-mail, to all the nonprofit organizations, State departments, and people who were scheduled to participate.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Excellent. Thank you.

Yes, in the back.

Reverend.

**REVEREND BRUCE H. DAVIDSON:** I hate to interrupt, but I believe that that has been postponed. I just got an e-mail today.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Did you get that Reverend Davidson? You got that information, too?

REVEREND DAVIDSON: Excellent. Thank you.

Thank you very much. We appreciate--

Oh, a question from Assemblyman--

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: I'm just going to take the Assemblyman Gregg mantle here and ask for the folks who, perhaps, already testified and those coming, that we do think of nonfiscal ways to deal with this issue. The tax credit -- we are looking at a difficult budgetary situation. So those kinds of innovative ways -- ways to do the same work with the same amount of money, or more work with the same amount of money, or redirecting the sources and how we might organize that -- would be very helpful.

And along those lines, one of the things that always concerns me, whether we're dealing in the area of preventing hunger, or child care, or transportation services, is trying to get at this question of how these programs are coordinated to deal with issues of -- and goes to what Rutgers is doing -- try to identify where the food banks are, in relation to where the population is, so that we have a way of coordinating things.

And I see the Department of Agriculture's a natural point -- focus of coordination and command control kind of system where we're sort of looking to redistribute the direct resources, the food banks. I look at -- seem to

be at the top of the -- well at the State, and out of the food banks, and out of the pantries, and the soup kitchens--

Has anyone thought to come up with a plan to look at questions of administration, redundancy, coordination of services? It sounds like some of that is going on, on sort of an ad hoc basis, as people go to meetings, meet each other, develop alliances and relationships. Are there-- Is there any comprehensive effort in this area that might help us do the job, as a State, as well as we can, that anyone's aware of?

MS. LaTOURETTE: May I respond to that, Assemblyman?

There are, in different parts--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: You need to-- Adele, you need to come to the microphone, if you will.

MS. LaTOURETTE: You want one of those little portable things.

In different parts of the state, there are different coalitions of emergency food providers. I think it may sound like there may be some redundancy. I think there really isn't. I think emergency food pantries do an amazing job. I really encourage you all to get out there and visit them, and go and take a look at what it is they do. I think they are extremely efficient, they are very streamlined, they do it on a shoestring budget, and they do it extremely well. So I think the level of redundancy is, really, pretty much nonexistent.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONAWAY: Madam Chair, if I may.

On that, this question of, for instance, getting in freezers, getting in ovens, and the like-- I think the State government probably has warehouse space that is-- If the State government could be the focus of that kind of an effort-- We're often sending out missives and information -- State government --

from our offices -- that perhaps there could be some central clearinghouse where some of the stuff could come in and flow back out in a way that might make it -- might be easier for one -- for there to be one focus of this kind of effort rather than multiple focuses all over (indiscernible) -- all over the -- for the State, as an example. I don't know if that might be just impractical. I'm just wondering what thinking there might be. And maybe we should have some kind of a process put together -- commission or something -- to try to develop the State plan for coordinating these services, right from the top, right on down so that one-- Well, I think it would help the budgetary matters, but it might help with the efficiency of service delivery.

MS. LaTOURETTE: I think that's a good point. I think all of the things -- the suggestions brought up here, in terms of tax credits and ways to kind of streamline the system and combine efforts are very good. I think, however, that what is really critically necessary is a source -- and you're going to hear me say it again, and again, and again -- a source that is consistent. Because what you're talking about are voluntary contributions by private sector communities, which are wonderful, and which we use up -- we use enormously. But we need something that we can rely on, because we can't rely-- This year, a corporation might be doing okay, and they're able to give us a donation of -- whether it be ovens, or whether it be refrigerators, or whether it be food. Next year, we don't know. And we're still serving increasing and increasing percentages.

So I just wanted to--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you.

In the interest of time, we're going to have to cut testimony. There are still a significant number of people who have asked to speak. So we're going to ask you-- When I start looking like -- and it will be after four minutes -- we need to have you stop your testimony.

Reverend Patricia Bruger, of the Emergency Food Coalition of Passaic County.

**REVEREND PATRICIA BRUGER:** Yes, thank you.

I'm not going to address any of the things they've already said.

I'm representing an agency that has grown from the beginning with the Community FoodBank, and we are the largest agency of the Emergency Food Coalition in Passaic County, which, this year, has already served over 200,000 individuals, food -- bagged food -- not soup kitchen. We represent pantries. It's bagged food going home to families in the hopes of keeping them in their homes.

This year alone, we've gained four new pantries that have come into the Coalition. As a total group, we have seen a 30 percent increase in numbers, basically working poor and seniors.

Our agency, also, is one of the only -- I believe maybe the only in the entire State of New Jersey-- We received a faith-based grant in 1999 to open a warehouse. So we work between the Community FoodBank and 35 agencies to help get the food and resources to Passaic County and northern New Jersey, to distribute to the smaller groups that don't have anything but a car -- maybe seniors that are volunteering to do their program, or a mother that's doing it for a couple of hours while her children are in school.

This past year, we have gone from two trucks and two walk-in freezer boxes and a cooler-- We've gone out and found funding for additional freezers and coolers for resources, to hold. We have a brand new truck, but we don't have funding yet to provide a driver. So we're working on volunteer drivers.

In October, the North Jersey media held one of the largest food drives, if not the largest, in the State of New Jersey -- food for the northern part of the state. Over 70,000 pounds came into CUMAC's facility on that day. The food was distributed, and it has already been used, almost in total, by those 35 agencies, as their fair share.

To give you an example of the change, three years ago that amount of food lasted the agencies well into February of the following year. So, this year, we used up the food from that food drive in one month, six weeks, as opposed to four or five months in previous years. Terrific difference in need.

The other thing I would just point out is that many agencies do work with volunteers. We have a staff of 11. Only five of them are full-time. I'm one of them. So we're working with part-time persons who are holding two jobs, because we don't have enough funding to supply the needs for the communities at hand.

We cannot emphasize enough the consistency of money for food banks to get high-quality foods for feeding programs. We rely on them so we don't have to go to the supermarket. For the first time in our 30 years, we will spend as much money in commercial places and wholesale dealers as we will spend at the Community FoodBank to purchase food. That's a terrible problem. And it's because, as you've already heard, they often have pages of

food, and only four or five items that are really nutritional. They've been filled with crackers and snack items. As the industry has changed, it's forced us to go other places to find nutritional bases.

And the other area -- just in health-- You should know that probably about 65 percent of our client base are affected with chronic diseases -- diabetes, asthma, HIV/AIDS -- which means, if we don't provide them with a high quality nutritious food, we are not contributing to their health needs, which means it's complicating their own issues. So, in order to do that, we're having to purchase more and more on our own to find it.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you very much.

Reverend Bruce Davidson, of the Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry.

Reverend Davidson, we're so glad to have you, again, with us today.

REVEREND DAVIDSON: Thank you. And I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. But I especially appreciate your willingness to have a joint hearing on this issue.

And I think, probably, everything that I came prepared to share has already been said. But whenever you put a clergyman in front of a microphone, the opportunity to preach presents itself.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: I'm timing, Reverend.

I'm a preacher's daughter, so I know timing doesn't always help.  
(laughter)

REVEREND DAVIDSON: That's not fair.

I want to say a couple of things. The one thing that I do want to say, that I don't think has been mentioned so far, is--

I serve as director of a statewide ministry for the Lutheran church, and I also serve as part-time staff member for the New Jersey Council of Churches. So I get into, probably, 30 or 40 congregations every month. And since I started to do this job about five years ago, I've done my own kind of independent survey. And every time I go into a church, I look for something. I look for some sign that this house of worship is concerned about an issue of hunger in its community. And I can tell you that in five years, in every congregation I visited, every place I've gone, I've seen at least one thing that indicates that the congregation is interested in reaching out to its membership, and also to people in need. Whether that's a place where food and canned goods are collected, whether it's a sign that talks about a local Crop Walk, whether it's actually hosting or housing a food pantry or a soup kitchen in the facility, every house of worship that I visited is at least doing one thing to address the issue of hunger.

I think that's a barometer that we need to pay some attention to. If we think that hunger is not a problem in our state, I would suggest that you visit any religious community and ask the clergy and the volunteers there what they're doing to address hunger in their community. And I would respectfully suggest that in every community, every worshiping congregation, you would hear stories of hunger in that neighborhood, whether it's Camden, or Trenton, or Jersey City, or Summit, or East Windsor, or Princeton, or anywhere else. You would find stories of working people, low-income people, people on disability, senior citizens in growing numbers, who need to access feeding programs just in

order to keep themselves healthy and alive. It's a growing need. We see it in faith communities all the time.

I want to talk about, very quickly, one feeding program that operates out of a Lutheran church in Dover, New Jersey, in Morris County. It was started in 1983, in September. They fed 64 people. They operated one day a week. They fed 64 people from September to the end of December. Last year, that same feeding program, which is now run by an interfaith organization of people, fed 30,950 people in one year.

The numbers are there. The need is somewhat invisible, which is why I'm so glad that you're focusing attention on it today. And it simply is a situation that needs to be addressed.

The faith community, I think, is trying to do what it can to respond to what we see. And what we're asking from the State is that you give support and strength to those organizations around the state that are actually doing an extremely excellent job in managing the resources that are given to them to help feed hungry people in New Jersey.

The food banks in this state couldn't do a better and more industrious job of using the money and resources they have to share with other groups, so that hungry people that we know of can be fed. It's extremely important.

Just to close, I thank you, Assemblyman Dancer, for your comments about gleaning. I hope you know that in the Old Testament, particularly where gleaning is addressed, it is addressed to those people who plant the crops. And there are actually rules about not going back over your

field a second time to clear it to the ground, but instead, to leave it so that there is enough there from your largess that it could be harvested by those in need.

The State of New Jersey has a \$28 billion State budget. I would hope that from that \$28 billion, the hungry people in New Jersey could glean something. And I would hope that there would be some money to provide for that kind of support.

So I appreciate your time.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you so much.

Joyce Campbell, the Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Trenton.

**JOYCE E. CAMPBELL:** Good afternoon.

Thank you for the opportunity, today, to speak to you about hunger.

My name is Joyce Campbell, and I'm the Division Director of the Emergency Services programs for the Catholic Charities, here in the Diocese of Trenton. We operate food pantries in Burlington, Mercer, and Ocean counties.

At Catholic Charities, we have seen consistent, significant increases in emergency food distribution. And our experience certainly reflects the increases that were outlined in the recent report distributed by the USDA last week.

Our food pantries experienced a 44 percent increase between 2000 and 2003. Our emergency services programs are one of many in the three counties we serve, and we alone provided food to 36,000 individuals last year. Those increases have continued this year, with an average year-to-date increase, across the three counties we serve, of 11 percent. However, in suburban

Burlington County, the increase year-to-date is 23 percent, and 69 percent of those receiving food are families with children.

I began my career with Catholic Charities in Burlington County in April of 1996, and I have never seen monthly statistics like those we reported for September and October this year. In September, 626 households were provided food, and in October that number rose to 756.

Everyone here has, today, spoken somewhat about what the increase can be attributed to. And certainly, the poor economy, low wages, and lack of affordable housing are driving this demand upward. We certainly have found that in studies we've conducted. Families have told us that food is the most flexible expense in their budget. They can buy less food and still keep a roof over their head, but if they don't pay all the rent, they're not going to have the roof over their head.

What we do-- We also provide homelessness prevention assistance. That money usually runs out after about six to eight months. Each year, what we do is encourage families to come in for food and save the precious few dollars that they have to pay their rent, their mortgage, and their utility bills. Certainly, that may be a piece of the increase of the demand, but it is certainly not all of it.

We know that those are really large issues that don't have quick, simple solutions. It's not going to be easy to raise wages and create more affordable housing. However, to ensure that, right now, our fellow citizens are fed and fed adequately, one solution is to direct more resources to food pantries.

Catholic Charities, like most nonprofits, wants to continue to partner with the State government in this endeavor. The communities that

surround our food pantries are already providing significant support. This support is in the form of donations of food to the pantries and the contribution of volunteer hours.

Last year, our Emergency Services programs had food valued over \$325,000 donated, 7,100 hours of volunteer time that was contributed at a value of \$146,000. We are on track, this year, to report even higher community support of our food pantries. In fact, there is actually more food in the community that could be donated to our programs if we had the capacity to recover it.

This brings me to my final point which is, despite generous community support, there are gaps that food pantries face that require additional funding. Obviously, funding to purchase adequate amounts of food to fill in the gaps on the shelves is the number one priority.

In addition, our programs need funds to physically operate the pantries, to have some staff and vehicles to obtain donated food, and funds to provide for some oversight of the pantries. We certainly could not operate our pantries without our volunteers. However, some professional staff is needed to oversee the management of the program.

In addition, the families who come to the pantries don't come for just food, they come with a host of social and economic challenges that, often times, require the skill of professionally trained social workers. This assistance is really critical to making a long-term difference in these individuals and families' lives, a difference that we hope would prevent them from having to continually come to us for food.

Therefore, on behalf of those we serve, I ask that you consider appropriating additional funding to the full range of food distribution programs in the state, so no one in New Jersey has to go hungry.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you very much.

I'm going to ask our remaining people -- I think are all representing programs in Trenton -- to be brief.

Rose Mary Bradley, the Princeton Deliverance Center.

Ms. Bradley.

**ROSE MARY BRADLEY:** Good evening.

We're a church located at 301 Southard Street, in Trenton. We have an emergency food pantry. And we service 500 people a month, where we give out food two days a week.

And the hunger grant has really been a blessing to our church, because we're able to bless a lot of people in our immediate community with nutritional foods. We're also members of Farmers Against Hunger. Also, we receive commodities. We receive foods from Philadelphia -- an organization called Philabundance. And we have certainly seen an increase in people coming to use during the summer and during the regular time.

But I would just say that I pray that the funds would continue to come. It's a help to the churches, because years ago we had to rely on the congregations to give. And their resources were limited. But because the funds are made available, it's really a help.

So I just want to thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you so much.

Joe Hovanec, Sacred Heart Church Food Outreach, in Trenton.

**JOE HOVANEC:** Hi, my name is Joe Hovanec, and this is Jane Davis, my partner.

Six years ago, we began at Sacred Heart with 40 bags of groceries -- took them to the various needy parts of the city, and handed them out in the streets, under Father Bob Tynski's direction. We now serve at least 250 to 300 people every time we have our food distribution and Lord's Table.

Our program is twofold. On the fourth Sunday of every month, we have what we call the Lord's Table, which is a sit-down luncheon, at which we serve whomever comes off the streets. On the Tuesday before the fourth Sunday, we have a food distribution program, which would be tomorrow, at which we hand out bags of groceries. And tomorrow, we'll -- an additional frozen turkey will be given to each person, as well.

Interestingly enough, we've been approached by a number of organizations to help with our program. There's a professional Indian group in North -- East Brunswick that has offered their services of cooking once a month for us on the second Sunday. They make a vegetarian meal. We're working with Har Sinai Jewish congregation, in Trenton. They provide one or two meals for us a year. And Kol Emet Jewish congregation, in Yardley, has a clothing and blanket drive for us every year -- a food drive. And they have a garden in which they have their sons and daughters growing vegetables for us.

We rely on Mercer Street Friends a whole lot for our funding -- USDA Hunger Grant. And it's very important to us that we can continue to rely on these programs.

Our parish is rather small, and all of our funding comes from parishioners, in addition to Mercer Street Friends. So we hope that this will continue.

And, Jane, do you have anything to add?

**JANE DAVIS:** Well, I just thought, maybe to put a face on hunger-- We've had people come in-- One older woman came in. She was retired, on a fixed income. DYFS had, unfortunately, just taken her five grandchildren away from her daughter. She had the children. She said, "Now, I don't have the money to feed these children." And she had them with her. So we fed her that day, and then we gave her bags of food. And different times she would come back. Eventually, we talked with her about being able to get assistance because of the fact-- And I don't know where all this assistance comes from. But she did approach her Assembly person and, apparently, did get assistance. Because she said, "You know, as soon as I can get help, I won't be coming here." But for the meantime, she had to feed these children for the two or three months, and, fortunately, we had the food.

But as I said, we get a lot of it from Mercer Street Friends. And that's just one of many, many examples of what takes place month to month.

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE:** Let me alert you to-- That lady is absolutely eligible for kinship care -- kinship guardian care. We passed legislation along that line for grandparents or other relatives that take over family members like that. So you keep that in mind if you see other cases like that. And you connect them with your legislators so that they can help with that.

MS. DAVIS: I told her-- I said, "I'm almost positive that that went through," because at the time, I knew someone who was testifying -- Dr. Terry Zelen (phonetic spelling) -- on behalf of a lot of this. And I said, "I'm positive it went through." I said, "Go to your Assembly person." And she did, and apparently--

But, naturally, the check wasn't there that day. She had to feed these five children in the meantime.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you very much.

MR. HOVANEK: Some of you may have the comments made by our clients.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: We do.

MR. HOVANEK: I didn't have enough for everyone.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: The lovely handwritten notes from your clients that come. That is very heart touching.

MR. HOVANEK: That shows their appreciation for what you and we are doing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you. Thank you very much.

And our last guest is Peter Wise, the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen.

Oh, no, it isn't the last. It's the second from the last.

I'm sorry.

**P E T E R W I S E:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'll be really brief, since you've had lots of testimony, and I don't want to be repetitive.

But I do have a three-page handout here. I represent the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, also known as TASK, T-A-S-K. We're about a mile from here, over on Escher Street, very near the Trenton *Times*. We're a private, nonreligious, nonsectarian, nonprofit charitable organization, 501(c) (3); unconditional, open-door policy on service.

I would refer you to Page 1 of the handout, which is our annual meal chart. If you look at that, you can see as recently as 1999, we were doing fewer than 100,000 per year. That's less than 2,000 meals per week. If you go to last year, 157,000 meals -- divide by 52 -- is about 3,000 meals a week. So from '99 to '03, we had a 50 percent increase.

Note that a considerable part of that time was before the dot-com bubble burst, so the economy was doing really great: 401ks, the Route 1 Corridor, unemployment was down to 3.9 percent. So the increase in meals isn't just a function of the more recent malaise in the economy. There's a growing trend here that our society is experiencing. In addition to our meal service, we have a school there for adult education. We have a full-time, on-site social worker.

But as stated by many people this afternoon, New Jersey is the wealthiest state in the country. We just passed Connecticut in that regard not so long ago. I'm a native New Jerseyan. This is my state. We are the wealthiest state in the country in the wealthiest country in the world. We have about one child in six living in poverty in the United States. That's about 13 million kids. If we put them all in one place, congregated them, they would fill up all the boroughs of New York City -- would be completely populated by children living in poverty.

If we were able to do that kind of magical thing, concentrate all the kids in one place who are living in poverty, I think it would be a national priority. We would say, "You know, we ought to do something about all those poor kids living up in New York." But because we don't do that magical thing, because they're spread over, they just kind of go off the screen. But we certainly have that in our dense State of New Jersey.

Who comes to a soup kitchen in '04? Basically, two blocks of people: the working poor, and those with multiple barriers to employment. We have unconditional service at the soup kitchen. But I do have a gauge of how many people are working, because we give express service to people who are working. We don't want them to have to sit 25 minutes until I get to their table. If they walk 20 minutes to get to the soup kitchen, wait 25 minutes, walk back, they'll lose their job day one. They just blew their lunch hour. So we give them express passes, if they give me some documentation of their employment. That's a way of me telling, roughly, what percentage of my population are working poor.

Today, we served about 500 people at lunch between 11:00 and 1:00. And about one-third of the people coming to the soup kitchen in Trenton are working poor.

I don't need to tell you about the minimum wage of \$5.15 in the state, and the fact that that hasn't been changed in a while. And it was indexed, primarily, with food costs, going some time back-- Food costs aren't up that much, but it doesn't recognize the increase in shelter costs, health-care costs, things like that. So it's woefully, inadequately out of times.

And then the second category of people who come to the soup kitchen are those who have multiple barriers to employment. The elderly -- when I'm talking about self-sufficiency -- they already worked. They're 80 years old, and we're just trying to help with their quality of life, since they didn't assemble that Social Security account and the 401ks to service them now. The mentally ill, the addicted, the physically challenged-- We have people coming in wheelchairs, crutches, hospital bands around their wrists as they come to the soup kitchen. Families with children, veterans, the homeless, etc.--

I say we don't do demographics, but some things are obvious. It's about 70 percent male, 30 percent female; about 70 percent African-American, 15 percent Caucasian -- these are all approximate numbers -- about 15 percent Latino, which is a growing population in the city and in the state.

And on my last page of the handout -- I won't take time to read it to you -- there's a lot of recommendations here. The thrust of it is that it's more than just food. We really have to work on root causes. I mean, a lot of the conversation this afternoon is how do we get more food out to the food pantries and the soup kitchens, and that's very worthy stuff -- through the tax system, and your taxing authority -- to promote the general welfare and the common good. But we also need to work on root causes, and a lot of those are listed on the last page, in terms of affordable housing and Section 8 rental vouchers, and addiction services, and all of that. I note that my item number one on that last page -- some of my numbers are a little-- I heard Adele update the numbers on the line items that our neighboring states of Pennsylvania and New York have for their food budgets. So we are slipping further behind them.

So to close, I think we need to do more than just hand out free food. We need to lift people up, especially the children. Our capital cannot be a shining city on a hill, or on the banks of the Delaware, with 3,000 people a week coming to its soup kitchens.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Thank you.

Jane Davis, Sacred Heart Food Outreach.

Oh, she already testified.

Oh, we already got you.

MS. DAVIS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PREVITE: Outstanding.

Well, we have had a most attentive audience.

I thank the legislators for their attention.

And I most assuredly thank all of you who do God's work every day in your soup kitchens, in your communities throughout this state. I'm sure there's going to be some legislative action, priorities that come as a result of this testimony.

And we thank you and bless you all as you go to your Thanksgiving dinners this week.

Thank you so much.

The meeting is adjourned.

**(MEETING CONCLUDED)**