

Joint Legislative Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Proposal: Human Services

Thursday, February 5th, 2026

On behalf of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony about the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget for Human Services.

For over 30 years, CCE Suffolk has been committed to ensuring that there are no boundaries to the aspirations of young people and no limits to their potential. By offering a comprehensive continuum of nutrition education throughout childhood, we prepare young people to succeed at every level of education and every milestone of life. Feeding your brain feeds your success, both of which come with proper nutrition.

CCE Suffolk currently has 25 staff members which are dedicated to serving Nassau and Suffolk County with high quality, research-based education. In 2025 alone, we served over 58,000 people through direct and indirect education, including programs in schools, community centers, farmers markets, places of worship, shelters, food pantries and more. We serve all ages including children, families, Veterans, seniors, and people living with disabilities.

In addition to direct service delivery, CCE Suffolk engages in policy and advocacy work at all levels of government. Amid deep uncertainty driven by federal policy shifts and unstable funding at both the state and city levels, we urge the Legislature to take bold action and prioritize meaningful investments in human services and community-based supports. Low-income and working-class families are being pushed to the brink, struggling to afford childcare, health care, and nutritious food. New York must pass a budget that strengthens—not shrinks—our social safety net and ensures every family and every community has the resources needed to thrive.

1. Fund SNAP-Ed New York at \$30M

For three decades, SNAP-Ed New York has built a statewide network of trusted community partners dedicated to making healthy choices easier for New Yorkers. SNAP-Ed strengthens the impact of SNAP by helping families stretch their food dollars and make informed decisions about what they eat. Through community-based providers and State agencies, SNAP-Ed gives New Yorkers of all ages practical nutrition education and increases access to fresh, affordable food that fits real budgets and real lives.

Although H.R.1 completely eliminated federal funding for SNAP-Ed, the need—and the impact—remains. Given that SNAP-Ed programming was solely funded through federal appropriations, New York is losing more than 200+ nutrition educators working in all 62 counties. Without committed funding in State Fiscal Year 2027, the State will lose infrastructure and relationships built over decades. In Federal Fiscal Year 2025, SNAP-Ed New York partnered with over 1,550 community partners and reached more than 1.845 million participants and their families throughout the State. From these partnerships, SNAP-Ed programming was able to deliver

35,706 nutrition workshops at over 900 community sites. Participants also reported significant life changes including 57% improved fruit and vegetable intake, 57% more physical activity, and 58% engaged in more price comparisons while food shopping.¹ Overall, household food security improved by 25% after participating in SNAP-Ed programming.

Additionally, every \$1 invested in the program saves up to \$9.54 in future healthcare costs.² As the State faces difficult decisions about how to allocate resources, it must also prepare for the cascading effects of proposed reductions to SNAP benefits and anticipated cuts to Medicaid eligibility. These changes will increase demand for State and community-based services, driving more families into food insecurity and limiting their access to essential healthcare. SNAP-Ed is one of the most effective tools the State has—providing families with the nutrition education, skills, and support needed to stretch limited food dollars and maintain healthy diets even as federal benefits decline. With trained educators that can seamlessly provide nutrition education in accord with the new US Dietary Guidelines, rather than putting on the school districts, we can ensure the correct core messages are being disseminated.

SNAP-Ed also supports New York’s agricultural economy by encouraging households to spend their grocery dollars on food grown and produced in the State. Through partnerships across education, healthcare, food retail, emergency food providers, agriculture, and community institutions, SNAP-Ed reaches New Yorkers where they live, learn, eat, work, and play.

At CCE Suffolk, SNAP-Ed supports fresh food box and nutrition education initiatives in neighborhoods like Brentwood that had a 100% free and reduced lunch rate prior to the great free lunch for all program. Many residents have limited or no access to fresh produce or farmers markets. SNAP-Ed provides the infrastructure for organizations like CCE Suffolk to offer vouchers on locally grown fruits and vegetables and to deliver skills-based workshops led by qualified nutritionists for youth, seniors, veterans and families. Unfortunately, without further State investments, this program would **completely cease operations by September 2026**.

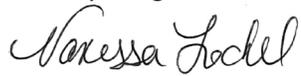
Recommendations:

- **To ensure the continuity of this proven and essential program, we urge the Legislature to prioritize a \$30 million investment to sustain nutrition services that help families stretch their SNAP benefits while improving health outcomes, reducing the incidence of chronic disease and building long-term food security.** This funding level will fully support 17 community-based organizations and 3 State agencies responsible for delivering SNAP-Ed programming across New York State.

Closing

We at CCE Suffolk sincerely thank the New York State Legislature for its ongoing commitment to New York’s youth and families. Providing them with the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential is not only the right thing to do—it is essential for the future of our State. Investing in SNAP-Ed New York’s evidence-based nutrition support services is a proven way to enhance the food safety net and positively impact our communities’ long-term health. Without this funding, not only will we lose the deep-seated relationships and quality programming of SNAP-Ed, many educators will lose their jobs, of which they have dedicated years’ to making New York a great place to live.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on these critical issues impacting all New Yorkers.



Vanessa Lockel, Executive Director

¹ USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Available at: [SNAP-Ed-NY-FY25-Impact-Report.pdf](#)

² University of Illinois Extension. (2023, June 13). Available at: [Creating healthier Illinoisans: SNAP-Ed generates up to \\$135 million in future benefits | Serving Calhoun, Cass, Greene, Morgan and Scott Counties | Illinois Extension | UIUC](#)