

**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM
BISHOP HOWARD J. HUBBARD
5/16/2007**

Thank you, Trudi. I especially wish to thank the Fiscal Policy Institute for coordinating this event and the Emmanuel Baptist Church for hosting us at your food pantry.

I come before you today as Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany which encompasses 14 counties and contains over 150,000 children, adults, and seniors living in poverty.

I also come to the issue of hunger and food stamps in my role as Chairperson of the statewide

**Public Policy Committee of the New York State
Catholic Conference and as current Chair of the
National Catholic Campaign for Human
Development which seeks to understand and
address the root causes of poverty in our nation.
Food stamps are needed by 1.8 million New
Yorkers and 35 million of our fellow Americans.**

**Within the Diocese of Albany, Catholic
Charities operates programs serving over 100,000
people in need. Earlier this year, Catholic
Charities nationally embarked upon a campaign to
cut poverty in half by the year 2020, and to focus
on the areas of hunger, housing, healthcare and
income security.**

This month, I along with many others have been focused on how to make the most difference in the lives of those who have too little to eat, and thus, on a daily basis, must turn both to programs such as food stamps, and to food pantries when food stamps are not enough or when, for whatever reason, they are ineligible for government food stamps. The recent experience of our parishes and other entities that operate food pantries has been that the demand on our resources has grown by as much as 40%.

My greatest concern is for the children of our area and state, and for our senior citizens living on a fixed income. Since 80% of food stamp benefits go to families with children,

then it is a moral imperative that the preservation and the expansion of the purchasing power of the food stamp program be a priority in our policy making decisions. And if we feed hungry children, we must also not forget our elderly citizens, some of whom subsist on the minimum benefit of \$10 per month. That amount is less than even what I and others are committing to this morning.

Unfortunately, the formula for computing food stamp allocations to families has not been adjusted for inflation since 1996. As an editorial in the New York Times last Sunday noted this “inadequate aid affects not only the amount of food a family can buy, but also

the types of purchases. With too few dollars to spend, junk food becomes the best value because it is caloric dense, cheap and imperishable.”

I call upon our elected officials in Congress to reauthorize the food-stamp program within the Farm Bill in a way that protects any further erosion of benefits and that shores up this program which is so vital to 1.8 million people in our state.

Thus, in solidarity with those who must face this dilemma of hunger on a daily basis, I accept the challenge to live on \$1.16 per meal today and do so in the prayerful hope that together we can

bring sufficient resources to those struggling to feed their families and themselves in this, the greatest and most affluent nation in the world. Please join me in making our collective voices clear and compelling so that by supporting fully the food stamp program we can take a concrete step toward eradicating hunger in our land.

Thank you for your kind attention and may God bless our efforts.