



**Census Commission
April 12, 2019
Randi Shubin Dresner - Testimony**

Thank you Commissioners, County Executive Bellone and Friends, my name is Randi Shubin Dresner, President and CEO of Island Harvest Food Bank. As an organization that serves 300,000 of Long Island's hungriest and most needy families, Island Harvest is deeply invested in making sure there is an accurate Census count on Long Island and throughout NYS.

However, this year, we know that is going to be more challenging than ever. Vulnerable families are often hiding in our communities—they are living in the shadows and interacting only with those they believe they can trust, such as organizations like Island Harvest who works deep in communities, with boots on the ground. Yet we are realistic. To do the level of outreach and strategic work necessary to ensure an accurate count, community based organizations will need at least the State's allocation of \$20 million dollars to be appropriated in a way that recognizes the challenges that every region in our State faces; Long Island's costs are much different than say Bovina NY, for example.

Leveraging private/public partnerships are important, but we need the State to understand how challenging this will Census will be for our residents.



Census Commission
April 12, 2019
Testimony
Page Two

Seniors, families in poverty, struggling veterans and our newly arrived families are all living in stressful situations. It will take a tremendous amount of work to ensure we reach everyone. We are prepared to be part of this important collaborative work.

You know that census data is used to fund very important programs; as an example, SNAP—the nation’s first line of defense and greatest resource to help lift people out of poverty and WIC, a vital nutritional security program for babies and new moms are both funded as a result of the data derived through the census.

As Commissioners, you are in important positions of power to do tremendous good for Long Island and NYS in recognizing the challenge we face. You can ensure that money is effectively and completely appropriated to organizations that are trusted in communities and committed to making sure every family counts. We urge you to at least consider this full allocation of \$20 million.

Thank you for the opportunity to have our testimony included in the discussion today.