



October 25, 2021

Melanie Hartzog
Deputy Mayor
New York City Department Health & Human Services
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez
Commissioner
New York City Department for the Aging
2 Lafayette Street
New York, NY 10007

Kate MacKenzie
Director
New York City Mayor's Office of Food Policy
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Re: Ending of GetFood Meal Deliveries for Older Adults

Dear Deputy Mayor Hartzog, Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez, and Director MacKenzie:

I am writing to urge your offices to provide transparency and clarity on how the City will continue to meet the nutritional needs of older adults once the COVID GetFood program ends next month. This is a critical moment in time, especially for the thousands of older adults whose food access needs were not being met prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic, food insecurity issues were exposed and exacerbated. GetFoodNYC was charged with making sure that no New Yorker went hungry as a result of the combined lockdown and severe economic fallout of the pandemic. Sadly, but not at all surprising, the majority of New Yorkers who have relied on this critical program are over the age of 60.

The City testified at a City Council hearing last month that there are three New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) programs slated to provide continuity of services to older adults who will continue to need food assistance — older adult centers, DFTA Home Delivered Meals (HDM), and the new DFTA Recovery Meals program. My concern is with this third, new option, around which there remains an

extremely concerning lack of information and transparency. I have heard from constituents and advocates that these seniors have been receiving communications for months regarding the conclusion of the program, but they still do not know if they are in fact registered for the new DFTA Recovery Meals, or how it will differ from the GetFood program.

As of the end of September 2021, roughly 20,000 seniors remained enrolled in GetFoodNYC, of which roughly 15,000 were not “known to DFTA” prior to the pandemic. These New Yorkers must receive certainty in how their food needs will continue to be met, whether through one of the three aforementioned programs or other resources. We cannot let these New Yorkers and their families fall through the cracks during any administrative changeover with programs or providers.

I look forward to receiving immediate clarity and assurances that this program will provide continued access to healthy meals for our most vulnerable older New Yorkers as the GetFood program ends, and to working with DFTA and the provider network going forward to address our long-term food planning needs.

In addition, I am calling on your offices to explore and ensure a culturally appropriate whole-food plant-based option is available for constituents, regardless of the program(s) set to fulfill their needs. We cannot continue to design food programs that do not promote health at the same time as we work to meet caloric needs of New Yorkers.

The pandemic made very clear what we already knew to be true — there is an absolute linkage between food, nutrition, and health outcomes. The realities of what that meant for New Yorkers over the past 18 months have been heartbreaking, and as a city we must commit to learn and to do better.

For any questions, please contact my deputy strategist, Rachel Atcheson, at rachel.atcheson@brooklynbp.nyc.gov. I look forward to your timely reply.

Sincerely,



Eric Adams
Brooklyn Borough President

EA/nrs

cc: Dr. Jacques Jiha, Commissioner, New York City Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
Joseph Taranto, Chief of Staff, OMB
Ellen Eng, Chief of Staff, Office of the Deputy Mayor, New York City Department of Health and Human Services (DMHHS)
Dylaney Bouwman, Chief of Staff, NYC Food Policy
Edgar Yu, Chief of Staff, DFTA
Sarah Sanchala, Director of Government Relations, DFTA