

Good Afternoon, I am Sr. Betsy Van Deusen from Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany.

- We've heard the national statistics and the regional statistics regarding hunger
- We know it's an issue in our communities
- When someone is suffering from hunger, or is having difficulty knowing where their next meal is coming from, there are far-reaching consequences
  - Can't focus on jobs, education – which are solutions out of poverty
  - Too many people live in this state of insecurity

Fred is a single dad who works two jobs to try to keep a semblance of normalcy for his two daughters and son. Between the rent and utilities this past winter, he had nothing to spare and then one of his jobs cut his hours. Fred learned that our food pantry was open when he could go and when our staff did the intake, Fred cried tears of gratitude because he knew with this extra help, he could get to his next pay check.

There are thousands of Freds and Tinas and Jamal's in our area, in this state and around the country.

- Catholic Charities operates 8 food pantries and Catholic Parishes run 43 more and a soup kitchen and we have programs to try and address hunger at many different levels
  - Last year, throughout the 14 counties served by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany, **34,274** people received help from our nutrition and hunger programs
    - This includes soup kitchens, food pantries, homebound meals for seniors, summer meal sites for children, congregate dining sites, WIC enrollments, and benefits advocacy.
    - **6,700** of these people lived in Albany County
  - The problem is widespread and largely hidden from view
- The story behind those numbers is more of the working poor and seniors living on fixed incomes
  - Trying to make ends meet, but medical, housing, transportation, and other costs are increasing
  - When unexpected bills hit, often they come out of the food budget
  - People then have to turn to emergency food programs like food pantries and soup kitchens
- We're innovating in the way we deliver services
  - Always advocating and making sure people connect with SNAP benefits
  - Have started pilot program with later food pantry hours open in the evenings to meet the increasing need to help working people
- However, from a policy standpoint, we need to continue supporting the vital programs that make up the hunger safety net
  - Cuts and reductions to assistance programs reverberate throughout people's lives
    - These reductions have a human impact that is often unseen
  - For the working poor, at the heart it's a living wage issue and affordable housing
- Catholic Charities is here to help, but we're all part of a connected society
  - As Pope Francis, who has spoken out on this issue said, *"I invite all of the institutions of the world, the Church, each of us, as one single human family, to give a voice to all of those who suffer silently from hunger, so that this voice becomes a roar which can shake the world."*
- Thank you for your time today and for your work to help the hungry in our area.