

## Statement from Rep. Adriano Espaillat (NY-13) Addressing Food Insecurity

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, too many residents in my district lacked access to nutritious foods. The pandemic brought lockdowns, unemployment, and supply chain disruptions that only served to increase the number of families that could no longer afford healthy meals. Now, approximately one in five residents in the Bronx, a borough plagued with food deserts, experience food insecurity. Years of underinvestment has meant that the only source of food for many are bodegas which often do not carry fresh foods. It is unacceptable that as the richest country in the world, there remains a significant population that is unable to adequately feed themselves and their families.

I am proud at how hard the local community is fighting against food insecurity and was delighted to show **Chairman Jim McGovern** our community's hard work during his hunger project tour. During our visit, we toured the **Edible Schoolyard NYC** which is a non-profit that partners with **New York City public schools** to teach students healthy lifestyles through hands-on gardening education. The organization integrates edible education into the schools' everyday curriculum. Organizations like this are vital to increasing students' awareness of healthy and nutritious lifestyles. When students can eat the food that they have grown, they are more likely to eat more fruits and vegetables.

Across the city, organizations have worked with the local government to find innovative ways to increase access to health foods within the urban environments. **Rooftop gardens** take the underutilized spaces on top of buildings to cultivate locally grown, healthy produce. Non-profit organizations like **Harlem Grown** create community urban gardens and provide youth an opportunity to engage in hands-on learning while also providing their community with healthy food.

On the federal level, I was proud to bring emergency relief to my district. With the return of **Community Project Funding**, I was able to bring in more than one million dollars for the **ARC Community Kitchen** and **CLOTH Food Pantry Reimagined**. Both organizations work with families to provide immediate food needs while also helping target the root cause of the food insecurity.

I joined several of my colleagues to advocate to drastically increase the funding for the **Farmers Market Nutrition Program** which would empower local farmers and ensure families using WIC have access to healthy foods. Currently, I am working to introduce a bill that enable schools to partner with non-profit organizations to create hands-on urban farming experiences for students within their classrooms. Specifically, students will be able to learn about **hydroponic** and **aquaponic** farming. Not only are alternate types of agriculture an important tool to fight against food deserts, but it is also a great way for students to engage meaningfully in STEM curriculum. Through learning about urban farming, students are also taught about sustainability concepts like water resource management and conservation.

Food insecurity is a battle that we all must face and solve together. Members of Congress must support local organizations that intimately understand the needs of their communities. The work that **Chairman McGovern** continues to do around food access is admirable, and I hope to see more of our colleagues take a similar strong stance to combat food inequity around the nation.