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Gerald Bergman
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March 26, 1997

Ms. Henrietta Davis, Chair
Ms. Kathy Born, Member
Mr. Anthony Galluccio, Member
City Council Food Policy Committee

✓ Attn.: City Clerk, Council Communication for 3/31/97

March is National Nutrition month. March and early April (prior to city budget discussions) would be the ideal time to discuss the progress the City of Cambridge is making toward meeting the goals of the 1991 Cambridge Food Policy Referendum (attached).

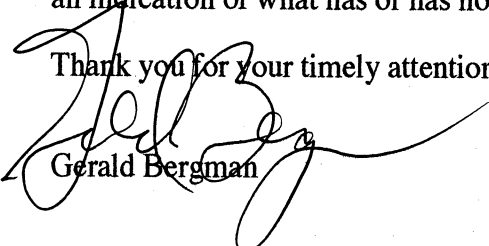
Participants in this discussion should include representation from the Cambridge Schools (**A Hungry Child Cannot Learn** is attached) and the Cambridge Hospital and Health Centers (publications such as the January, 1997 **Assessment of Public Health in Cambridge - Hunger and Nutrition** and **The Health of Cambridge - Hunger, Nutrition and Physical Activity**, prepared by the Cambridge Health Information Unit, are available from the Chair of the City Council Food Policy Committee).

The Referendum calling for the adoption of a Cambridge Food Policy, which received over 17,000 votes of support in 1991, represents the ongoing hard work and advocacy of groups such as the Health of the City - Hunger and Nutrition Action Group.

Progressive Food Policy implementation in Cambridge would cost us relatively little in local tax dollars when compared to the increases we would see in State and Federal revenues along side of the improvements we would see in a whole host of basic community building and stabilization efforts.

A review of the February 7 Food Policy Committee Meeting, which was held by request of the Health of the City - Hunger and Nutrition Action Group, serves as only an indication of what has or has not transpired over the past five years.

Thank you for your timely attention to this critical element of Cambridge public policy.


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CAMBRIDGE FOOD POLICY
PUBLIC POLICY QUESTION PASSED ON NOVEMBER 5, 1991
CALLING FOR THE IMMEDIATE ADOPTION OF A CAMBRIDGE FOOD POLICY
17,384 voters in favor (80% majority) NOV 27 AM 16
CAMBRIDGE MA.

Shall the City of Cambridge, in response to the growing hunger crisis which affects primarily elders and one in five children, develop and implement a Cambridge Food Policy which would recognize the right of every resident to accessible, safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable and affordable food, without barriers and without stigma, and shall such a policy include as some of its goals:

- 1) at least 50% participation of all eligible children in the Summer Food Service Program for Children during the summer of 1992, and 100% return of eligibility applications during this 1991-1992 school year in the subsidized School Breakfast and Lunch program;
- 2) 100% accessibility to all Federally financed food programs, through development of an aggressive outreach campaign reading the Federal Food Stamp Program, the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and nutrition programs for elders, emphasizing the need for translated materials, multilingual human service workers and the elimination of the stigma of participation;
- 3) integration of nutrition education into elementary and secondary school curricula and ongoing monitoring and staffing of school food programs;
- 4) financial assistance for food purchases so that emergency food pantries, meal programs and shelters can provide adequate and nutrition food during the period in which other goals of the Cambridge Food Policy are being developed and implemented;
- 5) examination of overall city development and city policy for its impact on the availability of food to neighborhoods and individuals through non-emergency food sources, and recognition that people's access to safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable and affordable food must be a priority in overall city development and policy;
- 6) recruitment of a fully representative citywide committee of residents and providers with maximum possible representation by those in need, which would develop further goals and strategies regarding the Cambridge Food Policy and hold hearings every six months so that Cambridge residents can assess the progress being made by city councilors, school committee members, city employees and city agencies on the development and implementation of the Cambridge Food Policy.

Argument for Question #1 - Ballot Question Document

One in five children in Cambridge is hungry or at risk of being hungry. Alarming numbers of elders and families struggle to meet minimal nutritional needs. Many of us are a paycheck, rent increase or health care crisis away from being unable to feed our families.

Your vote for a Cambridge Food Policy is a call to action. Hunger and malnutrition are symptoms of the larger problem of inadequate and unequal distribution of food and other resources.

The goals of the Cambridge Food Policy acknowledges that access to acceptable and affordable food without barriers and without stigma is a basic human right and part of a dignified human existence.

The Cambridge Food Policy will direct the city to make federal food programs more accessible. Hundreds of thousands of federal dollars go unspent because people are not signed up for programs which provide summer food for children, school breakfasts and lunches and Food Stamps.

The Cambridge Food Policy goes beyond the work of meals programs and food pantries which serve more than 5000 Cambridge residents each month, by addressing not only the symptoms but the causes for hunger and malnutrition. Access to safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable and affordable food is a right, regardless of economic or social class. The Cambridge Food Policy will provide the framework within which the city, its residents, and all groups in the city can take action.

Health of the City Hunger and Nutrition Action Group - Gerald Bergman, CO-Chair
P.O. 390768, Cambridge, MA. 02139 - (617) 354-2648

HEALTH OF THE CITY

A Partnership for a Healthy Cambridge

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HUNGER AND NUTRITION ACTION GROUP

Co-Chairs

Dr. William Dietz, M.D., Ph.D.

Gerald Bergman

A Hungry Child Cannot Learn

Any child who starts his or her school day hungry is not getting an equal opportunity at education. There is a demonstrated relationship between food, good nutrition, and the capacity of children to develop and learn. A hungry child cannot learn; a child who cannot learn becomes an adult who cannot compete successfully. An essential step toward attaining equal education is ensuring that every child—rich or poor or in between—goes through each school day on an equal nutritional footing with his or her classmates.

You Can't Teach a Hungry Child

Mild undernutrition can have serious effects. Undernutrition increases the risk of illness and its severity, certainly a negative effect on a child's ability to learn. The learning-related effects of undernutrition begin before any visible signs of growth retardation occur.

According to studies released by Tufts University Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy, recent research provides compelling evidence that undernutrition during any period of childhood can have detrimental effects on the cognitive development of children and their later productivity as adults. In ways not previously known, undernutrition impacts the behavior of children, their school performance, and their overall cognitive development.

Undernourished children are less physically active, less responsive socially, and less attentive, independent, or curious. They are more anxious and cannot concentrate as well. As a result, their reading ability, verbal skills, and motor skills suffer. These effects do not have to be permanent if better nutrition is provided and the environment is improved.

Iron deficiency anemia, a specific kind of undernutrition, is one of the most prevalent nutritional problems among children. Even mild cases lead to shortened attention span, irritability, fatigue and decreased ability to concentrate. Anemic children do poorly on vocabulary, reading, mathematical problem solving, and psychological tests.

Hunger leads to nervousness, irritability, disinterest in the learning situation and the inability to concentrate. The hungry child is passive, apathetic, timid, and demands little from her/his environment. Hunger disrupts the learning process—one developmental step is lost and it is difficult to move on to the next one.

Studies have documented the significant relationship between eating a nutritious breakfast at school and the ability to perform in school. A study conducted in Lawrence, Massachusetts demonstrated that participation in a school breakfast program by low-income students is associated with significant improvement in standardized achievement test scores and tardiness rates, and a trend toward improvement in absenteeism.

Dr. William Dietz, M.D., Ph.D. • Director of Clinical Nutrition, New England Medical Center; Professor of Pediatrics, Tufts University School of Medicine

Gerald Bergman • Former Chair, Mass. Anti-Hunger Coalition; Former Coordinator, Cambridge Food Pantry Network; Advisory Committee, Mass. Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project; Founding Board Member, Cambridge Food Coop; Chair, Cambridge Food Policy/Anti-Hunger Referendum Campaign

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Skipping breakfast directly impairs a child's performance in the morning. Frequent skipping of breakfast is linked to mild undernutrition which can lead to increased risk of infections, causing more frequent and more severe illnesses.

We know that in Cambridge hundreds of kids are hungry, and we know that hungry kids can't learn. Recognizing the link between nutrition and learning, and understanding that hundreds of children arrive at school in Cambridge hungry and ill-prepared to learn, parents, children, and advocates have agreed that no child should go hungry in school in Cambridge.

In Cambridge our children are not invisible. We know that for many children, eating breakfast and/or lunch is not a regular occurrence. Since many children do not eat a nutritious breakfast at home, they are hungry when they reach school and either remain hungry until lunch time (or later) or eat less-nutritious food to stave off hunger pains. Issues surrounding school food programs, good nutrition and nutrition education must be cooperatively examined and solutions must be created and implemented.

In June 1993, teachers from all of our city's third, fifth and seventh grade homeroom classes were asked to administer a one-page survey to their students. Surveys were available in Spanish, Haitian Kreyol, and Portuguese. 1,053 surveys were returned.

The survey asked:

- whether and where students had eaten breakfast that day;
- whether students ate breakfast regularly at home or school, and if not, why not;
- whether the students were involved in helping siblings with breakfast.

According to the results of this survey: **20-25% of Cambridge 5th and 7th graders go hungry each school day because they do not eat a breakfast or morning snack. According to Cambridge School Department data, only 13% of elementary school students eat a school breakfast on any given day.**

Stand with Us as We Take a Stand Against Hunger

In 1991, the residents of Cambridge passed the first Food Policy Referendum in the country by a 4-1 margin. The referendum mandated that the City of Cambridge respond to the growing hunger crisis, which affects one in seven children, by developing and implementing a Cambridge Food Policy. This policy would also recognize the right of every resident to accessible, safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable and affordable food, without barriers and without stigma. As one of the primary goals of that historic referendum, the City of Cambridge was called upon to take all necessary steps to insure that children do NOT go hungry during the school day.

The results of school surveys and other state and national studies indicate that a primary factor in the failure to equalize educational opportunity is the crisis of childhood hunger. The Hunger and Nutrition Action Group has as its primary goal the full implementation of the referendum. We are working to develop a school-based food program which would allow all of our children to get an equal education.

Parents, students, teachers, administrators, and advocates for children and quality equal education can work together to fully implement the Cambridge Food Policy Referendum. We can work together to ensure that every child will have an equal opportunity for success in school!

For more information, contact:
Gerald Bergman, Co-chair
Hunger and Nutrition Action Group
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Consent Communication #5

5-182

Communication was received from Gerald Bergman, 82 Elm Street, transmitting his concern on what progress the City of Cambridge has made toward meeting the goals of the 1991 Cambridge Foor Policy Referendum.

In City Council March 31, 1997

Placed in file