# NY State of Health Partners with Holiday Food Pantries Across the State to Connect New Yorkers to Health Insurance and Hunger Relief Resources

## COVID-19 Pandemic Increases Food Insecurity and Unemployment Levels, Escalating the Need for Health Coverage and Nutrition Assistance

ALBANY, N.Y. (November 25, 2020) - NY State of Health, the state's official health plan Marketplace, today announced the start of the annual holiday food pantry partnership program, which helps New Yorkers access quality, affordable health insurance and nutrition assistance. Both food insecurity and unemployment rates of New Yorkers have increased during the COVID-19 public health emergency, highlighting the critical need for this program during the 2020 holiday season. NY State of Health continues to serve as a safety net to consumers who have lost job-based health insurance coverage.

"NY State of Health is pleased to collaborate with our food pantry and food bank partners once again, to provide enrollment assistance and help people get the health care they need during these challenging times," said NY State of Health Executive Director, Donna Frescatore. "Many food pantry recipients may qualify for free or low-cost health insurance, which offers free preventive care and free COVID-19 testing services."

This year, amid the global pandemic, NY State of Health is reaching out to food pantries and uninsured New Yorkers in non-traditional ways while onsite enrollment events remain on pause. Throughout November and December, the Marketplace will distribute information via print and social media, to tens of thousands of food pantry recipients across the state, through free Thanksgiving dinners, outdoor and mobile food pantries and hunger relief drive-through events in food bank and business parking lots.

This year, NY State of Health is partnering with Equinox on their Thanksgiving Community Dinner, providing over 11,000 meals via contactless delivery, by helping community members learn how to access free or low-cost health insurance through the Marketplace. NY State of Health information will be shared through the Equinox website, Thanksgiving dinner outreach media releases, social media, newsletter and with Equinox program staff to pass on to clients who need coverage. Additionally, NY State of Health certified enrollment assistors will conduct several free virtual presentations and enrollment sessions open to the public through food bank networks. NY State of Health virtual and onsite events can be found here.

This food pantry partnership program is one of several innovative programs that New York State has launched under Governor Cuomo's leadership this year. With the support of the state's food, health care and farming sectors, these programs have offered essential health care, hunger and economic relief resources to lower income New Yorkers and those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This past July, Governor Cuomo announced $1.5 million for "Feeding New York State"to assist food insecure New Yorkers and the state's farmers.

NY State of Health's referral program, in partnership with the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), to share federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) information with people who renew their coverage through the Marketplace has helped more than 227,000 people access hunger relief since its 2019 launch.

NYSOH's Open Enrollment Period for 2021 Qualified Health Plans is underway now. NYSOH's robust plan options remain consistent with 2020. Everyone currently enrolled in a Qualified Health Plan is encouraged to

renew their coverage, and anyone without health insurance should take this opportunity to enroll by visiting https://nystateofhealth.ny.gov.

December 15, 2020 is the deadline to enroll for coverage that starts January 1, 2021. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, consumers already enrolled in Medicaid, Child Health Plus, or the Essential Plan will have their coverage continued automatically and do not need to renew at this time.

Consumers can apply for coverage through **www.nystateofhealth.ny.gov** by phone at 1-855-355-5777 and by connecting with a free enrollment assistor.