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New Report: 80,000 Kosher Households in NYC Are Food Insecure

Ahead of Passover, Met Council Distributes 2.2 Million lbs. of Kosher-For-Passover Food and Provides more than \$430,000 in Food Cards and to Enable Families to Celebrate the Holiday

NEW YORK March 24, 2015-Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty today announced that recent analysis shows that there are more than 300,000 people living in approximately 80,000 poor and nearpoor Jewish households that keep kosher (Jewish dietary laws), according to data collected in the most recent *The Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011 Special Report on Poverty by UJA-Federation of NY in consultation with Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty.* 

The high cost of kosher food presents a unique challenge for many New Yorkers: on average, a kosher meal is 30% more expensive. To enable these households to celebrate the upcoming Passover holiday, Met Council will distribute 2.2 million pounds of kosher-for-Passover food to families in need and provide more than \$430,000 in food cards to purchase kosher-for-Passover food.

"The Passover Haggadah teaches us to 'let all who are hungry come to our table," said Met Council CEO and Executive Director David M. Frankel. "With one in four Jewish New Yorkers struggling to feed their families kosher and nutritious foods, Met Council's extraordinary staff works every day with our Jewish Community Council network — located on the front lines in all five boroughs — and City and State agency partners to provide dignified solutions to hunger. The 2.2 million pounds of food the \$430,000 in food cards we distribute will enable our clients to observe Passover with a traditional and nutritious meal that otherwise would have been price prohibitive."

"This initiative exemplifies the important work of Met Council and other UJA-Federation beneficiary agencies to enhance the safety net for Jewish New Yorkers," says Eric S. Goldstein, CEO of UJA-Federation of New York. "This help is especially critical during Passover when the high cost of Kosher food poses additional challenges for the 80,000 Jewish households grappling with food insecurity."

Ahead of Jewish holidays, Met Council distributes an increased amount of food packages and food cards because we understand the unique challenges of affording kosher food and the importance of food for rituals. These Passover food cards enable our clients the purchase power at local kosher supermarkets.

"Bensonhurst COJO helps those in need in every way for Passover and all year round," said Rabbi Gary Pollack, President COJO of Bensonhurst. "We are happy to serve the Bensonhurst Community."

"The Passover food distribution makes a real impact on our clients, especially those that are barely able to make ends meet an entire year, yet find holiday expenses insurmountable," said Rabbi Yeruchim Silber Executive Director of Boro Park Jewish Community Council. "We are most grateful to Met Council for providing this lifeline to our community."

"There is no exercise better for the heart before pesach, than delivering boxes of food to people and lifting their spirits," said Shea Rubenstein Executive Vice President of JCC of Marine Park.

"We are particularly pleased to receive the Met Council's Passover Food delivery as there are too many areas of the Bronx where few if any stores carry Pesach foods," said David Edelstein, Executive Director Jewish Community Council of Pelham Parkway. "Elderly and disabled Jewish people who may not have a way to get to a far away store count on our Council for most of their Pesach essentials - and we count on the Met Council for the means to help them."

"Passover is a joyous but difficult holiday for Jews in need to celebrate," said Cynthia Zalisky Executive Director of Queens JCC. "Everything must be purchased with a kosher for Passover label which is generally more expensive this time of year. The Queens Jewish Community Council is committed to help these families have the means to celebrate the holiday properly. Our tradition is to wish everyone a "sweet" Passover. That is what QJCC in conjunction with Met Council works tirelessly to do for our clientele."

"Passover is the holiday when we celebrate our freedom as a Jewish nation," said Nathan Krasnovksy Executive Director of Jewish Community Council of the Rockaway Peninsula. "Unfortunately, there are still far too many that are not free from poverty. Thankfully, with the assistance of Met Council we are able to help alleviate the burden on these households by providing assistance with much needed food from the JCCRP pantry."

"Our attention is brought to the issue of food insecurity and poverty in our community during the holiday season, however this is not an problem that pops up once a year," said Rachel Krich Site Director of Shorefront JCC. "These families live in poverty every day and we are constantly working with them to help them deal with important day to day needs. We need to start focusing on this issue as a constant and not simply as something that we see during the holiday seasons."

"We are excited to assist numerous Williamsburg families again with our annual Pre-Passover distribution, in partnership with Met Council, as in years past, helping thousands of families in a respectable manner with some of the basic food necessities for Passover," said Rabbi David Niederman of the United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg and North Brooklyn. "Come the Seder, we will all say

'whoever it is hungry shall come and eat'; for the donors, supporters and wonderful staff of Met Council this will have special meaning, having worked for weeks and months to assure that no family, no child goes hungry."

Passover begins at sunset on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. If you or someone you know needs food assistance this Passover, please call: 212-453-9539.

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## **ABOUT:**

For more than four decades, Met Council has supported and championed families, seniors and adults living in poverty and near-poverty. Met Council provides immediate assistance to New Yorkers in crisis and creates pathways to self sufficiency through the following programs: America's Largest Kosher Food Pantry System, Emergency Social Services, Family Violence Services, Home Repairs, Benefits Enrollment & Outreach, and Affordable Housing. Our grassroots Jewish Community Council network provides support to families in their neighborhoods—right where they live.

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