

FOCUS

47 Years...doing together
what we cannot do alone
1967—2014

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Interfaith Food Pantry Affiliates

*Congregation Beth Emeth
First Unitarian Universalist
Society of Albany
Islamic Center of Albany
New Covenant Presbyterian
St. Andrews Episcopal*

Rev. Debra Jameson,
Director of
Community Ministry

www.focuschurches.net

Testimony of FOCUS Churches of Albany for Wage Board 2014 Hearing

Submitted by:

Executive Director, Rev. Debra Jameson
Coordinator of Advocacy, Elizabeth Glassanos

As a coalition of 7 faith communities in the Capital Region, and in partnership with many more interfaith project partners, FOCUS testifies in **strong support of including tipped workers in the minimum wage.**

We urge you to eliminate the subminimum wage for tipped workers.

The current system of low wages and subminimum wages for tipped workers neglect the reality of poverty and hunger throughout New York State where nearly 3 million people experience hunger, or, “food insecurity.”¹

FOCUS operates a large soup kitchen and food pantry for families experiencing hunger. Approximately 400+ households are served through our programs on an ongoing basis throughout the year. This is just a small slice of the large network of emergency food programs that are operating throughout New York State.

Many of these programs are serving men and women who are currently working minimum wage jobs, many of them in the service industries where their earnings are dependent upon the whim of customer tips. Many of their employers do not ensure their full compensation through the tip credit.

When families do not have enough income, they go hungry. Hardworking men and women are turning to food pantries, soup kitchens and homeless shelters to feed and house themselves and their children because their wages are too low.

Since 1984 we have operated “temporary” food programs that cannot yet close because of the high need in our community. Food insecurity is a chronic issue. Individuals and families are **unable to afford enough food.** Not just in our neighborhood here in Center Square, but across the Capital Region and throughout New York State.

We need YOU to be advocates for the dignity of a day’s work. **The hard earned wage of work should pull you out from under poverty, not keep you entrapped within its cycle.**

¹ http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/map-the-meal-gap/2012/ny_allcountiesmmg_2012.pdf