



PRESS RELEASE
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With the Highest Unemployment in New England: Increasing Need for Food Assistance Stresses RI Community Food Bank & Member Agencies
As State's Unemployment Again Tops Double-Digits, Food Requests Soar 24%

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – As unemployment rates in the United States reach record levels, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank warned that it could soon be overwhelmed by demand as lines at food pantries swell.

The Ocean State's economy is by far the most troubled in New England with an unemployment rate of 10.3 percent. Maine, where 7.8 percent of job seekers could not find jobs last month, has the region's second-highest jobless rate. It is followed by Massachusetts (7.4 percent), Connecticut (7.3 percent), Vermont (6.8 percent) and New Hampshire (5.1 percent).

January marked the twelfth straight month of job declines by our state, bringing the total number of unemployed to 57,800 – the state's highest level on record.

As more Rhode Islanders lose their jobs, and the economy continues to struggle, demand at local food pantries has skyrocketed. "These unemployment figures are staggering and frightening," commented Andrew Schiff, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. "With the state's unemployment rate topping 10 percent again in January, our member food pantries are stressed to meet the rising demand. Our network has reported a 24 percent increase compared to the same time last year," finished Schiff.

During January, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank provided food assistance to 49,009 people through a network of 285 member agency programs – up from 39,464 one year ago. Overall, nearly 11% of all Rhode Islanders, representing 115,000 people, are at risk of going hungry.

"There is still the perception that things may become worse before they get better," added Schiff. "Our network of food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other programs are already stretched to the limit in trying to meet the current need. We are depending on the continued support of the community as we work to make sure our neighbors in need have access to healthy meals."

The Rhode Island Community Food Bank is a non-profit organization located in Providence, RI. The Food Bank solicits, stores and distributes food products donated by supermarkets, wholesalers, food processors, local farmers and community food drives. The food is then distributed to the Food Bank's network of 285 member agencies. In the past fiscal year, the Food Bank distributed 8.3 million pounds of food. For more information about the Food Bank, please visit www.rifoodbank.org

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