

# *NEW YORK GROWN FOOD FOR NEW YORK KIDS*

March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
New York State Senate  
LOB 907  
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Carl Heastie  
New York State Assembly  
LOB 932  
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Governor Cuomo, Speaker Heastie, Majority Leaders Stewart Cousins, and esteemed Members of the Assembly Agriculture and Education Committees,

Thank you for your continued support for New York's Farm to School programs in the SFY22 executive and one house budget proposals. K-12 schools across the state serve breakfast, lunch, snack, and afterschool meals to 1.7 million schoolchildren, providing half of their daily calories on average. In light of rising food insecurity rates in New York due to the pandemic, incorporating more fresh locally-grown New York food into school meals through farm to school programs is an effective way to increase access to healthy food for our most vulnerable New Yorkers, while also improving student academic performance and creating new markets for our state's farmers. Since 2018, the Farm to School Incentive and Grants Programs have worked hand in hand, leading the nation in their ability to unlock schools' ability to buy more local food, thereby improving student health while building resilient local economies.

**These two programs are successfully working together to drive investment into our farms, support the health of our kids, and to build the resilient local food system we need now.** After year two of the incentive program, 57 schools reported reaching 30% spending on local food for lunch, up from 7 in year one, doubling school spending on food from New York farms to over \$5 million, and serving that food to over 90,000 kids statewide. To continue this growth, we encourage the Governor, Senate, and Assembly to work to ensure that the following proposed budget items are included in the SFY22 Enacted Budget:

- \$10 million for the Farm to School incentive lunch program;
- \$1.5 million split between the agriculture and education budgets for the Farm to School grants program to invest a statewide network of regional farm to school coordinators, and to support the training and equipment schools need to increase local purchasing; and
- Language to ensure that during the state of emergency caused by the pandemic, all schools serving meals through USDA summer meals programs are eligible to receive the extra reimbursement they earned from this incentive, as was proposed in the Assembly's Education, Labor, and Family Assistance bill (A3006-B, Part A).

**Finally, this program should evolve to incentivize spending on New York grown food for all school meals in the future** in order to increase its economic and public health impact and make program participation accessible to all schools across the state. One strategy to accomplish this could be reimbursing schools that spend 30% of total meal costs at up to 25 cents for both breakfast and lunch, however care must be taken to ensure that schools that currently do not have access to New York-produced fluid milk are not further disadvantaged by any program change. We believe this strategy would enable the program to take greater hold in schools as the state emerges from the pandemic while allowing the program impact and budgetary placeholder to grow naturally over time.

Thank you all for your leadership in working to support child nutrition and farm viability in New York during this challenging time. We look forward to working alongside you to continue to make New York a leader and innovator in improving student health and building resilient local food systems through farm to school programs.

Sincerely,

*See attached list of signatories*

CC: Senator Shelley Mayer, Chair, Senate Education Committee  
Senator Michelle Hinchey, Chair, Senate Agriculture Committee  
Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, Chair, Assembly Agriculture Committee  
Assemblymen Michael Benedetto, Chair, Assembly Education Committee

Samantha Levy, New York Policy Manager, American Farmland Trust

Mark Bordeau and Julie Raway, Senior Director of Food Services and Registered Dietitian, Broome Tioga  
BOCES Food Services

Amy Klein, Chief Executive Officer, Capital Roots

Wes Gillingham, Associate Director, Catskill Mountainkeeper

Phoebe Schreiner, Executive Director, Center For Agricultural Development And Entrepreneurship  
(CADE)

Jeffery Zuercher, Food Service Manager, Charter School for Applied Technologies

Bobbi Wilding, Executive Director, Clean and Healthy New York

Sue Watrous, Cafeteria Manager, Clymer Central School

Abbie Watts, Director of Research and School Partnerships, Community Food Advocates

Barbara Albi, Food Service Director, Depew Union Free School District

Vicky Williams, Cafeteria Manager, Ellicottville Central School

Heather Meehan, Farm to School Coordinator, East End Food Institute

Gabrielle Blavatsky, Policy Director, Equity Advocates

Crystal Humphrey, Cook/Manager, Erie County School Nutrition Association

Charlotte Staats, Essex Farm Institute Coordinator, Essex Farm Institute

Nicholas Buess, Associate Director, Mobilization & Policy, Food Bank For New York City

Andrew Barrett, New York Program Director, FoodCorps

Nick Weith, Food Service Director and Farm to School Coordinator, Forestville Central School District

Anne Campbell, Wellness Director, Genesee Valley Central School

Lauren French, Superintendent, Gouverneur Central School

Anne Rich, Director of Food & Nutrition Services, Hamburg CSD

Mary Ann Johnson, Deputy Director, Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation

Tami Augugliaro, Director of Food Service, Lancaster CSD

Julia McCarthy, Deputy Director, Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy

Margaret Brown, Senior Attorney, Natural Resources Defense Council

Cynthia Haskins, President, New York Apple Association

Renee St. Jacques, Associate Director of Public Policy, New York Farm Bureau

Patrick McClellan, Director of Policy, New York League of Conservation Voters

Jennifer Martin, MBA, CAE, Executive Director, New York School Nutrition Association

Jessica Garay, Public Policy Coordinator, NYS Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Tom Tatun, Deputy Director of Government Relations, NYS Association of School Business Officials

Domenic Barile Jr., Food Service Director, Niagara Wheatfield Central School District

Emily Gartenberg, Program Associate, No Kid Hungry New York

Kyle Belokopitsky , Executive Director, NYS Parent Teacher Association

Caroline Bobick, Senior Governmental Relations Representative, NYS School Boards Association

Kate Dorr, School Nutrition Director, Oneida Herkimer Madison BOCES Food and Nutrition Service

Kelly Drozdak, Cafeteria Manager, Our Lady of Black Rock School

Paula Brooks, Cafeteria Manager, Portville Central School

Qiana Mickie, Founding Principal, QJM Multiprise & Policy Advisor, JustFood

Lori Benson, Cafeteria Manager, Randolph Central School District

John C. Salo, Executive Director, Rural Health Network of South Central NY

David Little, Executive Director, Rural Schools Association of NYS

Julia Van Loon, President, Slate Foods, Inc.

Maurice Pierre Friedrichs and Laura Luciano, Co-Governors, Slow Food New York State

Laura Watson, Food Service Director, Springville-Griffith Institute CSD

Sandra Gannon, Food Service Director, St. John Lutheran

Barbara Trybuskiewicz, Food Service Director, St. John the Baptist School

August Ruckdeschel, Chair, Suffolk County Food Policy Council

Kristi Sajdak, Food Service Director, Sweet Home CSD

Mark-Antonio Smith, Founder/Director, The Nurtury For Kids, LLC

Rosemarie Hanson, Food Service Director, Trumansburg Schools

Robert Meyers, Cafeteria Manager, Wellsville Central School

Carolyn Whalen, Food Service Manager, West Seneca Schools

Susan Bell, School Food Service Director, Wilson CSD

Lynn Dombrowski, Food Service Director, Wyndham Lawn

Kathleen Schuessler, Superintendent of Schools, Wyoming Central School District