



2022 Position Paper

School Nutrition Professionals mobilized immediately when the pandemic closed school doors statewide back in March of 2020. Despite the many challenges they were subjected to, such as staff shortages, supply chain issues and increased operating costs, they continued to ensure student access to healthy school meals at no charge for all students, through the extension of federal waivers. These waivers however are set to expire on June 30, 2022.

School breakfast, lunch, summer meals and afterschool meals have offered a lifeline for families struggling with economic uncertainty. These programs, proven to fuel student success and combat child hunger and obesity, will be critical to our state's recovery. To support the health and achievement of New York's students and to ensure the financial sustainability of school meal programs, the 3,500+ members of the New York School Nutrition Association (NYSNA) call on New York elected officials to:

Beginning in school year 2022-2023, provide healthy school meals at no charge for all students in New York State – regardless of income.

- Provide all students equal access to school breakfast and lunch and eliminate any stigma or barriers for students. Nutritious school meals are proven to support learning, improve attendance, classroom behavior and contribute to overall health and wellness.
- Ensure that no child goes hungry during the school day or accrues unpaid meal debt, a burden on both families and school district budgets.
- Ensure that over 2,000 schools and nearly 800,000 students in New York State will continue to have access to healthy meals at no charge once the waivers expire on June 30, 2022.

Provide \$5 million dollars in equipment grant money to help update New York State school kitchens

- NYS received 543 applications for equipment requests which totaled approximately \$5 million dollars. NYS was only able to fund a total of 159 equipment grant awards totaling \$1,805,067.
- Many school food service programs throughout the state are working with antiquated, non-energy efficient equipment which in turn is negatively affecting the environment. Providing equipment grants could be a great use of taxpayer dollars.

The 3,500+ members of the NYSNA support Governor Hochul's initiative to transfer the administration of the Child Nutrition Program:

Improve the Child Nutrition Program (CNP) by Transferring it from State Education Department (SED) into the Department of Agriculture and Markets (AGM):

- Allowing AGM to oversee the CNP will result in a smoother operation with school food service programs.
- Transitioning the CNP to AGM will result in more economic development throughout the state.
- AGM will be able to increase access to healthy foods in New York school food service programs, helping students fight childhood obesity and helping them attain a better education.

The 3,500+ members of the NYSNA also support the New York Grown Food For New York Kids Coalition (NYGFFNYK) with the following initiatives:

Expand the 30% program to include all school meals, increase reimbursement, call for a rulemaking process, and maintain the \$10 million placeholder.

- Expand student access to healthy local foods at more meals during the school day and increase school food purchases from New York producers.
- This will also reduce the administrative burden related to separating lunch purchases from other meal purchases.

Raise small purchase threshold to match federal level.

- Enable schools to purchase food more easily from New York farmers and producers, who often find it challenging to participate in formal bidding and procurement processes.