



## 2024 Position Paper

The New York School Nutrition Association (NYSNA) recognizes and wishes to thank our state lawmakers for implementing measures that assisted families in need throughout the pandemic. As we transition back to normal operations, access to nutritious meals for all children in New York State remains to be our number one priority. As we know, schools in rural and suburban communities and areas with stark economic inequalities also struggle to qualify for CEP. While an additional 550 more schools in New York are offering free school meals to all students, an estimated 1,000 schools are still left behind. 1 in 6 kids in New York experience hunger, disproportionately impacting Black and Latinx children. It has been proven, when students are fed nutritionally sound meals, students are more successful and less likely to experience hunger and obesity or diet related diseases.

In addition, we urge state lawmakers to reconsider changes to the NY 30% Incentive Program. New York is rich in agricultural products, and we know that fresh food is vital to the health and well-being of all students. Yet despite the great strides the state has made in our farm to school initiatives, the program remains difficult to qualify for and creates additional administrative burdens discouraging many schools from applying for the incentive despite remaining committed to farm to school programs.

To support the health and achievement of ALL New York students, and to ensure the financial sustainability of school meal programs while offering continued support to our schools and local farmers, the 3,800 plus members of the NYSNA urge our state lawmakers to:

Beginning in the school year 2024-2025:

**Provide Healthy School Meals at no charge for all students in New York State - regardless of income.**

- **Provides equal access to healthy school meals for all children.**
- **Promotes healthy eating and nutrition standards to all students.**
- **Creates positive associations with diet quality, food security and academic performance.**
- **Reduces administrative burden on school food service staff; provides a steady budget for school food service programs and eliminates unpaid meal debt.**

**Expand the NY 30% Incentive Program to include all National School Lunch Program Meals (NSLP) with an increased reimbursement of 25 cents per lunch served.**

- **Include all meals operated under the National School Lunch Program as part of the incentive.**
- **Expand student access to healthier, locally sourced NY State Agricultural products.**
- **Increase a school district's ability to purchase more NY sourced products while also increasing the participation rates in school meals.**
- **Changes current bill language from "shall not exceed 25 cents" to "an additional 25 cents, per lunch served".**