



2025 Position Paper

The New York School Nutrition Association (NYSNA) recognizes and extends gratitude to our state lawmakers for implementing critical measures that supported families during the pandemic. As we shape the future direction of our school nutrition programs, ensuring access to nutritious meals for all children in New York State remains our top priority.

Despite progress, significant gaps persist. Over 18.8% of households in New York experience food insecurity, disproportionately affecting children. Nearly 1 in 5 kids in New York faces hunger, with many relying on school meals as a consistent source of nutrition. Currently, an estimated 284,000 students in more than 600 schools across the state still lack access to free school meals.

Healthy School Meals for All is a transformative initiative aimed at bridging this gap, ensuring that every child in New York has access to nutritious, no-cost meals at school. This program not only supports students' growth, health, and academic success but also represents an equitable investment—costing just \$1.87 per New York State taxpayer to cover the remaining children without universal meal access in their districts.

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 2025-2026:

Establish and fund a statewide, permanent Healthy School Meals for All program that provides meals for all students at no cost, regardless of income, that:

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

Expand the NY 30% Incentive Program to include all meals served through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) with an increased reimbursement of 25 cents per lunch served.

- **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.**