



Child Food Insecurity in New York City: *An Action Plan*

Dear Council Member,

Children in all five boroughs are growing up facing hunger, a number that has grown due to the coronavirus pandemic, especially within Black and Latino communities. Hunger takes a profound toll on children's health, happiness, and their ability to build successful futures and break the cycle of poverty.

Childhood hunger is, however, a solvable problem. As an elected leader in New York City, you have the power to help and, together, we can ensure that all children get the nutrition they need to grow up healthy, educated and strong.

With your leadership, we can ensure that New York City:

- ☐ Enacts bold strategies that provide better access to meal programs, particularly those in the New York City public schools.
- ☐ Promotes innovative solutions to remove barriers so that children in low-income families can access nutrition programs, including improving coordination and collaboration across New York City agencies.
- ☐ Advocates for critical policy changes to ensure thousands more children in need across the five boroughs are receiving healthy meals every day
- ☐ Develops, shares and implements a replicable "blueprint" for ending childhood hunger.

As a leader in New York City, you are on the front lines of this crisis. You can transform an issue into a movement. You can use your role to raise awareness about childhood hunger, advance proven solutions and institute policies that bring about lasting changes to help families put food on the table.

No Kid Hungry New York is focused on relief and solutions during this crisis. This year, 1 in 4 kids may face hunger in New York City. We are working to end childhood hunger by helping launch and improve programs that give all the kids the healthy food they need to thrive.

We look forward to being your partner throughout this journey,



Director

No Kid Hungry New York

The Problem: Childhood Hunger in New York City

Food insecurity looks different in every household. For some families, the pantry is completely empty. In others, parents skip dinner a few nights a week so their kids can have something to eat in the evening. No matter how food insecurity manifests, much is at stake for these children, families and the communities where they live. When kids don't get the consistent nutrition they need each day throughout the year, it's harder for them to grow up healthy, educated and strong. Consistent access to nutrition is linked to cognitive and physical development, better long-term health, higher test scores and better education outcomes.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing deep-rooted disparities, increasing the severity of myriad health and economic crises and pushing millions more families into poverty and hunger throughout the country. In New York City, the new reality created by the pandemic has made it harder for children to access no-cost meals provided by schools and community organizations. **As a result, an estimated 1 in 4 kids in New York City may face hunger.**¹

COVID-19: Impact on Child Food Insecurity

1 in 4 kids
may face hunger in New
York City.¹

2022 Projected Child Food Insecurity by Borough ¹	
Bronx	36%
Brooklyn	28%
Manhattan	20%
Queens	22%
Staten Island	19%
New York City Total	26%



End Childhood Hunger: Background and Action List for New York City Leaders



Nutrition Programs in the New York City Public Schools

For many children, school meals are their only source of consistent nutrition. The importance of school meals has never been more apparent than when school buildings closed for classroom learning in the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic. Over the years, the New York City Department of Education has expanded access to school meals by implementing Breakfast After the Bell programs in select schools and offering no-cost breakfast and lunch to all students.

Opportunities:

- ☐ Ensure full implementation of Breakfast After the Bell programs in all New York City public schools.
- ☐ Support increased funding for school kitchen capital projects and resources to protect school cafeteria staff members.
- ☐ Support efforts to provide culturally relevant food as part of the school meal programs.
- ☐ Increase access to Summer Meals Programs
- ☐ Expand the number of School Pantries and Mobile Markets.

Coordination and Collaboration Across New York City Agencies

Agencies across New York City touch the lives of children and families, yet programs are often run in silos and cross-agency promotion is rare. With so many New Yorkers facing food insecurity, it is critical that agencies come together to broaden awareness and outreach to support families in need.

Opportunities:

- ☐ Increase awareness, outreach and enrollment for nutrition programs, with an emphasis on immigrant families.
- ☐ Support a comprehensive outreach and advocacy campaign on the Child Tax Credit



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Innovation and Leadership

The eyes of the world are always on New York City, and we have an opportunity to lead in implementation and advocacy on programs that can address child food insecurity.

Opportunities:

- ☐ Provide adult meals at summer meals sites with city tax levy dollars.
- ☐ Become a leading voice at the federal level for programs that help New Yorkers facing food insecurity.
- ☐ Increase accessibility for meal programs on weekends and holidays.



Across All Programs

Opportunities:

- ☐ Support efforts to pass equitable and inclusive city policies that will improve access to programs including school meals, afterschool meals, summer meals programs, and SNAP.
- ☐ Ensure city agencies have the resources to efficiently administer and promote each program and hold them accountable for reaching quantitative goals to increase program participation.
- ☐ Use your platform to celebrate the champions who are feeding kids and families through child nutrition and other safety net programs.
- ☐ Raise awareness by speaking publicly about the issue of childhood hunger, using social media to promote programs and program sites to constituents, and talk to school administrators and staff about how child hunger impacts their students.



About No Kid Hungry New York



Throughout the pandemic, No Kid Hungry New York has been working with schools, community organizations, and families to keep kids from sliding into hunger. Through a combination of emergency grants, strategic assistance, advocacy, and awareness-building, No Kid Hungry New York is helping kids, families, and communities across the New York City get the resources they need.

Since the pandemic began, our team has:

- Provided nearly \$2 million in grant support for schools and community organizations in New York City as well as Puerto Rico.
- Launched a texting line where families in New York City can text “NYC FOOD” or “NYC COMIDA” to 304-304 to find the nearest NYC Department of Education Meal Hub.
- Raised awareness for school nutrition programs like Meal Hubs and Pandemic EBT.

No Kid Hungry New York extends our gratitude to everyone on the frontlines ensuring that kids don't go hungry during this crisis. Thank you to all who are working through these unprecedented times.

We appreciate you!



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Reference

¹ The Impact of Coronavirus on Food Insecurity, Feeding America, March 31 2021,
<https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/coronavirus-hunger-research/>