

Addressing Rising Child Hunger in New York 2021 Policy Agenda

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a catastrophic health and economic crisis, pushing many families into poverty and hunger. In New York, the new reality created by the pandemic has led to financial hardship for families and made it harder for children to access no-cost meals provided by schools and community organizations. **As a result, it is estimated that 1 in 5 children in New York are now food insecure.**

Although food insecurity is one of the most daunting challenges facing our state, it is also one of the most readily solvable. With the right policies, New York can lead the country in combatting rising hunger during the pandemic and making lasting change that ensures that no New Yorker faces hunger in the future.

**20%**

the percent of
children in New York
projected to be food
insecure in 2021¹

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is one of the most effective and efficient ways to ensure that kids and families have the support they need to purchase food. With the economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis permeating every part of the state, it is more important than ever to remove the barriers that impede access to SNAP, such as transportation challenges, stigma, and food supply issues.

Opportunities:

- **Establish a Restaurant Meals Program to expand nutrition access for vulnerable participants while supporting struggling restaurants (S64/A1524).**
- **Reduce administrative burdens by streamlining SNAP enrollment with other support programs and enhancing participant experience.**
- **Expand outreach and application assistance services in areas with high eligibility and low participation.**



School Meals

For many children, school meals are their only source of consistent nutrition. In normal times, when kids get school breakfast and school lunch, it leads to calmer, more focused classrooms where students are better able to learn. The importance of school meals have never been more apparent than when schools closed for classroom learning in the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic.

Opportunities:

- **Incentivize use of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to maximize student access to free school meals.**
- **Protect and expand state school breakfast law to ensure Breakfast After the Bell for all children in eligible schools.**
- **Provide enhanced funding and regulatory flexibilities to the Farm to School Grant and Incentive programs to ensure student access to fresh, healthy foods.**

Summer Meals

Even in normal times, summer is the hungriest time of year for many kids from families with low income because school breakfast and lunch are unavailable. Summer meals programs can help kids get the nutrition they need during these difficult months, but, transportation challenges, bureaucratic hurdles and even extreme weather can become barriers to participation. As a result, summer meals only reached 27% of eligible children in New York in 2018.²

Opportunities:

- **Establish a state program modeled on the federal Summer EBT pilot to provide additional grocery assistance to low-income families with children in rural and hard-to-reach communities where summer meals programs are difficult to access.**
- **Increase the number of summer meal sites through expanded state outreach to potential sponsors.**

About No Kid Hungry New York

No Kid Hungry New York is a campaign of Share Our Strength, a national anti-hunger organization dedicated to ending hunger and poverty. Using proven, practical strategies, our No Kid Hungry New York campaign builds public-private partnerships with the goal of ensuring children across the state have access to the healthy food they need, every day.

For more information contact Rachel Sabella, Director of No Kid Hungry New York, at rsabella@strength.org.



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

2. Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation: Summer Nutrition Status Report, FRAC, <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/frac-summer-nutrition-report-2019.pdf>.