



Child Food Insecurity in New York City: An Action Plan



Dear Council Member,

The last several years have been difficult for New York City and children in all five boroughs are still growing up facing hunger, especially those within historically marginalized 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 eligible 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 could 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Sabella".

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, because policies and practices entrenched in our laws and society leave millions of children behind, especially in rural areas, tribal lands and among communities of color, the promise of opportunity remains unfairly out of reach for far too many children. The pandemic, the economic fallout and inflation have exacerbated these existing deep-rooted disparities, increasing the severity of a myriad health and economic crises, pushing millions more families into poverty and hunger throughout New York City. **Keep in mind, 1 in 4 kids in New York City faces hunger.¹**

Impact on Child Food Insecurity

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

2022 Child Food Insecurity by Borough ¹	
Bronx	33%
Brooklyn	25%
Manhattan	18%
Queens	19%
Staten Island	14%
New York City Total	24%



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 had 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 Public Schools have 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 cafeteria redesign projects and resources to protect school cafeteria staff members including air conditioners in all school kitchens.
- Support efforts to expand access to culturally responsive food as part of school meal programs.
- Increase access to Summer Meals Programs through new sites and outreach 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:

- Fully staff positions related to SNAP at the NYC Department of Social Services.
- Increase awareness, outreach and enrollment for nutrition programs, with an emphasis on immigrant families.
- Support a comprehensive outreach and advocacy campaign on Tax Credits to families.



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

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:

- Pilot new initiatives at select summer meals sites with city tax levy dollars including meals for adults or meals at NYCHA buildings.
- 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, economic fallout, and inflation, No Kid Hungry New York has been working with schools, government partners, 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 5 boroughs get the resources they need.

Since the pandemic began, our team has:

- Provided grant support, technical assistance and resources for schools, government agencies 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 summer meals site.
- Increased outreach and awareness for school nutrition programs like breakfast, SNAP enrollment and Pandemic EBT.
- Celebrated [Hunger Heroes](#) from the Office of Food and Nutrition Services in the New York City Public Schools.



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Reference

¹. Dewey, A., Harris, V., Hake, M., & Engelhard, E. (2024). [Map the Meal Gap 2024](https://map.feedingamerica.org/): An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2022. Feeding America.
<https://map.feedingamerica.org/>