



# Ending Child Hunger in New York



Published: February 2026

Dear New York State Official,

The last several years have been difficult in New York State, with 1 in 5 kids facing hunger statewide, but they have also proven that smart policy matters. When our state invests in nutrition programs like SNAP, school and summer meals, and programs that help get grocery and tax benefits into the hands of families, hunger and hardship give way to security and opportunity, especially for those in historically marginalized communities.

Over the last two years, New York has taken major steps forward to fight child hunger. The state opted into Summer EBT, a game-changing program that helps families of more than 2 million children stretch their grocery budgets and provide nutritious meals when school is out. New York also enacted universal school meals, ensuring every child receives a no-cost school breakfast and lunch. Both initiatives were implemented with bipartisan support, setting a model for the nation.

Yet, we know that it takes more than food to fight hunger. In the years ahead, No Kid Hungry New York has committed to transforming systems and creating a more equitable world where

**With your leadership, we can:**

- ☐ develop, share and implement a replicable “blueprint” for ending childhood hunger;
- ☐ enact bold strategies that provide better access to meal programs;
- ☐ promote innovative solutions to remove barriers so that children in families with low-income can access nutrition programs, and;
- ☐ advocate for critical policy changes to ensure that children in need are receiving healthy meals every day.

As a leader in New York State, you and your team are on the front lines of driving change and have the power to transform an issue into a movement. You are uniquely positioned to raise awareness about childhood hunger, advance proven solutions to reduce food insecurity and institute policies that bring about lasting change.

We look forward to being your partner throughout this journey,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Sabella". The script is fluid and cursive.

Rachel Sabella  
Director, No Kid Hungry New York  
Share Our Strength

## The Problem: Childhood Hunger in New York



Food insecurity looks different in every household. For some families, the pantry is completely empty. In others, caregivers skip dinner a few nights a week so their kids can have something to eat in the evening. No matter how food insecurity manifests, a lot 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. Deep-rooted disparities have intensified existing health and economic challenges, pushing more families into poverty and food insecurity across the country. **Keep in mind, 1 in 5 kids in New York State faces hunger.<sup>1</sup>**

---

### Impact on Child Food Insecurity



19%

of children face hunger in  
New York State<sup>1</sup>

---

# End Childhood Hunger: An Action List for New York State Leaders



Your leadership is crucial to successfully ending hunger in New York State. With your support, federal nutrition programs can run more effectively and efficiently, reaching more kids across New York with the food they need to grow up healthy and strong. Additional information can be found on the No Kid Hungry New York Policy Resources Website at <https://state.nokidhungry.org/new-york/new-york-state-policy-resources/>

## Across all Programs

- ☐ Support efforts to pass equitable and inclusive state policies that will improve access to school breakfast, lunch, after-school meals, summer meals, Summer EBT, SNAP, WIC and emergency food.
- ☐ Ensure state agencies have the resources to efficiently administer 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 through child nutrition programs.

## Summer Meals and Summer EBT

- ☐ Appropriate the necessary administrative match funds in the state budget to continue Summer EBT in 2026 and collaborate with OTDA leadership to ensure smooth, successful program operation.
- ☐ Actively promote and provide clear participation guidance about Summer EBT to eligible families so they can access the program quickly and efficiently.
- ☐ Establish a statewide or centralized database system and process for rapid eligibility determination to distribute Summer EBT benefits more efficiently.
- ☐ Protect and expand access to summer meal programs across the state, including options only available in rural communities. For thousands of children across New York, summer is the hungriest time of the year. When school is out, so are the school meals that many families rely on. Expanding access to summer meal programs ensures children have access to meals even when school cafeterias are closed.
- ☐ Use your platform to promote summer meal availability so families know how and where to access meals when school is out.
- ☐ Ensure sustained state investment in staffing, transportation, packaging, and technical assistance so schools and community organizations can successfully operate non-congregate summer meal programs.
- ☐ Work with NYSED to provide clear guidance and timely communication to non-congregate sponsors on rural eligibility, approved models, and allowable flexibilities.

**2,000,000**

The approximate number of New York State students eligible for Summer EBT<sup>2</sup>

**Over 19 million**

The approximate number of **summer meals served** in New York State in 2025

# End Childhood Hunger: An Action List for New York State Leaders



Your leadership is crucial to successfully ending hunger in New York State. With your support, federal nutrition programs can run more effectively and efficiently, reaching more kids across New York with the food they need to grow up healthy and strong. Additional information can be found on the No Kid Hungry New York Policy Resources Website at <https://state.nokidhungry.org/new-york/new-york-state-policy-resources/>

## Poverty Alleviation

- ☐ Support efforts to expand outreach and awareness of the New York State Empire State Child Tax Credit and ensure families are accessing all available tax credits.

## SNAP

- ☐ Support proposals to increase the minimum SNAP benefit for New Yorkers.
- ☐ Support state investments in SNAP outreach, such as the [NOEP program](#), and enrollment partnerships with trusted community-based organizations that help eligible families navigate applications and recertification.
- ☐ Reduce administrative barriers by supporting policies that streamline eligibility determination, documentation requirements, and renewal processes.
- ☐ Protect access to SNAP as temporary federal flexibilities expire by ensuring state and county systems are adequately staffed and resourced.
- ☐ Establish a "Hunger-Free Campus Program" which addresses hunger among students at higher education institutions by expanding SNAP enrollment and benefit redemption options.

## School Meals

- ☐ Support continued funding for Healthy School Meals for All, which provides access to no cost school meals for all students.
- ☐ Provide financial support for school meal programs in the state budget, that will cover additional costs associated with inflation (meal delivery and transportation).
- ☐ Modify the Farm to School Incentive program to allow schools to include purchases made for the School Breakfast Program to be in the 30 percent threshold.
- ☐ Support investments in school nutrition workforce stability, including training, recruitment, and retention of school food service staff.

## Child Care Access

- ☐ Expand access to affordable child care to support family economic stability. Reliable child care enables caregivers to work, maintain income, and consistently afford food.
- ☐ Invest in child care capacity and workforce supports, prioritizing communities most impacted by food insecurity.

# Deep Dive: Children Facing Hunger in New York by County<sup>1</sup>



| County      | Child food insecurity rate - % |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Albany      | 17%                            |
| Allegany    | 19%                            |
| Bronx       | 33%                            |
| Broome      | 21%                            |
| Cattaraugus | 21%                            |
| Cayuga      | 18%                            |
| Chautauqua  | 21%                            |
| Chemung     | 20%                            |
| Chenango    | 18%                            |
| Clinton     | 18%                            |
| Columbia    | 17%                            |
| Cortland    | 17%                            |
| Delaware    | 19%                            |
| Dutchess    | 12%                            |
| Erie        | 19%                            |
| Essex       | 18%                            |

| County     | Child food insecurity rate - % |
|------------|--------------------------------|
| Franklin   | 20%                            |
| Fulton     | 20%                            |
| Genesee    | 14%                            |
| Greene     | 15%                            |
| Hamilton   | 15%                            |
| Herkimer   | 17%                            |
| Jefferson  | 21%                            |
| Kings      | 27%                            |
| Lewis      | 17%                            |
| Livingston | 14%                            |
| Madison    | 15%                            |
| Monroe     | 19%                            |
| Montgomery | 19%                            |
| Nassau     | 7%                             |
| New York   | 19%                            |
| Niagara    | 19%                            |

# Deep Dive: Children Facing Hunger in New York by County<sup>1</sup>



| County       | Child food insecurity rate - % |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Oneida       | 19%                            |
| Onondaga     | 19%                            |
| Ontario      | 14%                            |
| Orange       | 16%                            |
| Orleans      | 18%                            |
| Oswego       | 20%                            |
| Otsego       | 17%                            |
| Putnam       | 7%                             |
| Queens       | 20%                            |
| Rensselaer   | 17%                            |
| Richmond     | 15%                            |
| Rockland     | 16%                            |
| St. Lawrence | 21%                            |
| Saratoga     | 10%                            |
| Schenectady  | 17%                            |
| Schoharie    | 16%                            |

| County             | Child food insecurity rate - % |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Schuyler           | 18%                            |
| Seneca             | 18%                            |
| Steuben            | 18%                            |
| Suffolk            | 8%                             |
| Sullivan           | 20%                            |
| Tioga              | 17%                            |
| Tompkins           | 14%                            |
| Ulster             | 15%                            |
| Warren             | 15%                            |
| Washington         | 17%                            |
| Wayne              | 15%                            |
| Westchester        | 11%                            |
| Wyoming            | 15%                            |
| Yates              | 17%                            |
| <b>State Total</b> | <b>19%</b>                     |
|                    |                                |

## About No Kid Hungry New York

For more than 40 years, Share Our Strength has been a nonprofit leader, creating innovative, sustainable ways to help people out of poverty. In 2010, we launched No Kid Hungry, a national campaign to end childhood hunger in America by changing the way that schools, communities and entire cities ensure hungry children have the food they need.

As many as 750,180 kids face hunger in New York State.<sup>1</sup> But this is a solvable problem. Investments in nutrition programs protect many families from hunger and have helped stave off greater rates of child food insecurity. This is complicated work, but we know what strategies have been successful and today, we have the momentum and opportunity to make real progress. No Kid Hungry is working to ensure that policies and nutrition programs are adapting to meet the needs of families and that schools and communities have the funding, flexibility, guidance and strategies to support children's access to three healthy meals a day—now and in the future.



## CONTACT

**Rachel Sabella**  
Director  
No Kid Hungry New York  
[rsabella@strength.org](mailto:rsabella@strength.org)  
[www.nokidhungry.org/newyork](http://www.nokidhungry.org/newyork)



<sup>1</sup> Ribar, D.C., Harris, V., Dewey, A., Dawes, S., and Engelhard, E. (2025). Map the Meal Gap: An Analysis of Local Food Insecurity and Food Costs in the United States in 2023. Feeding America National Organization.

<sup>2</sup> Estimated Number of Summer EBT Eligible Children and Total Benefit Amounts, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sebt/estimated-children-eligible>