

## Jillian Cassidy

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**From:** Kate Dorr <kdorr@oneida-boces.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 24, 2024 3:03 PM  
**To:** financechair@nysenate.gov; wamchair@nyassembly.gov  
**Subject:** Healthy Meals for All

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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**I would like to strongly encourage New York State to establish and fund a permanent, statewide Healthy School Meals for All program** that provides school breakfast and lunch at no cost to all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.

Our School Food Authority- Oneida Herkimer Madison BOCES- made up of 16 middle income school districts- is one that has directly benefited from last year's budget inclusion of the expansion of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Our schools were able to apply and implement CEP for all buildings because of the supplemental fundings. We went from serving 1500 breakfast and 5700 lunches a day in the 2022-2023 school year to about 3700 breakfasts and 7200 lunches this school year. Our participation in school meals has skyrocketed. Families of all socioeconomic backgrounds are enjoying school meals without stigma, or fear of negative balances, or impact to their own personal budgets.

Despite how fortunate we are in our community to receive free meals, that expansion did not reach all struggling families. Hundreds of thousands of students remain in non-CEP schools, where a family of four earning just \$56,000 – far below a livable wage in New York – is over-income for free school meals.

Providing universal no-cost school meals is the only way to ensure equitable access for all New York students.

Healthy School Meals for All has wide-ranging benefits:

- Households with children who attend schools that provide school meals at no cost to all students are [far less likely](#) to experience food insecurity.
- Across all income levels, [kids receive their healthiest meals at school](#), consuming more milk, fruit, vegetables, and fiber than their peers.
- When students eat school meals, [attendance and academic performance improve](#).
- Providing school breakfast and lunch each school day makes New York more affordable, as it saves families an estimated \$150 per child per month in grocery costs.

Our neighbors in Massachusetts and Vermont have already implemented [permanent, statewide school meals for all policies](#), alongside California, Colorado, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, and New Mexico. New York can and must be next.

We urge lawmakers to build on last year's historic investment by fully funding healthy school meals for *all* New York students in the FY2025 State Budget.

Thank you,

Kate Dorr

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"We are better together. We are OHM BOCES!"

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