



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Hinchey, Advocates and Governor Unite for Universal School Meals

MICHELLE HINCHEY January 10, 2025

| ISSUE: **UNIVERSAL SCHOOL MEALS ACT**



Senator Michelle Hinchey joins Governor Hochul and advocates to announce the inclusion of Universal School Meals in the FY'26 Executive Budget

Senator Michelle Hinchey and Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas Secure Support for Universal School Meals in Executive Budget, Lead Coalition of Over 200 Education Groups, Farm Advocates, Unions, and Anti-Hunger Organizations Backing Free Breakfast and Lunch for All New York Students

WESTBURY, NY — Today, Senator Michelle Hinchey will join Governor Kathy Hochul to announce the governor's pledge to include funding for Hinchey's [Universal School Meals](#) program (S.594/A.282) in her FY'2026 Executive Budget. This commitment marks a critical

milestone in the fight to ensure that every student in New York has access to free breakfast and lunch at school. Thanks to historic investments in the FY2024 and FY2025 state budgets, nearly 384,000 New York students have gained access to free school meals; however, 280,000 students across nearly 600 schools remain without this vital support.

The announcement comes following a three-year coalition effort led by Senator Hinchey, Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas, and a powerhouse partnership of **more than 200** schools, unions, anti-hunger organizations, parents, teachers, and students under the **Healthy School Meals for All NY Kids Coalition**. The coalition has been instrumental in advocating for the importance of adopting Universal School Meals, emphasizing benefits like improved student health and learning, the eradication of stigma and school meal debt, and significant economic relief for families, who will **save an estimated** \$165 per child each month on food costs.

Senator Michelle Hinchey said, “The Governor’s pledge to fund our vision for a Universal School Meals program in her Executive Budget is a monumental step forward for New York, taking us leaps and bounds closer to ending food insecurity in schools, eliminating social stigma and meal debt, and putting tangible savings back into families’ pockets. I’m honored to lead this effort in the Senate, and together, alongside Assemblymember González-Rojas and an incredible coalition of advocates, parents, and teachers, we’re not only ready to bring Universal School Meals to New York—we’re going to make it happen this year.”

Assemblymember González-Rojas said, “Across the state, working families are asking us to address affordability and the rising rates of hunger. Today is a step forward in ensuring that no student in New York goes hungry as they learn in our schools. The Governor’s announcement in support of universal school meals is a demonstration of leadership in addressing both of these issues and I’m proud to have carried the Universal School Meals Act

with Senator Michelle Hinchey for over two years. Fully funding universal school meals is a critical next step in addressing stigma in schools, nourishing our young people, and saving families about \$165 in grocery spending per child each month. I cannot think of a more important function for those of us in government than to eliminate hunger for hundreds of thousands of students. I'm eternally grateful to the coalition who helped us get here. Let's get this done."

A recent Hunger Solutions New York survey found that 87% of parents and caregivers statewide support free school meals for all students. Universal school meal programs also allow schools to focus on initiatives like farm-to-school—a priority Senator Hinchey is advancing this year through legislation ([S.591](#)) and a budget push to incorporate more fresh, local farm products into school meals, benefiting New York farmers and providing healthier options for students.

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2025-S594

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- - In Committee Assembly
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-

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January 02, 2025

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