



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara urges Cuomo to sign 'Farm to Food Bank' legislation into law: Joined colleagues and Food Bank of the Southern Tier in early November to rally support for the new law (UPDATE: See new online support petition from the New York Farm Bureau)

THOMAS F. O'MARA November 25, 2016

| ISSUE: **FOOD BANKS**



I'm proud to co-sponsor, strongly support and urge Governor Cuomo to sign into law this commonsense 'Farm to Food Bank' legislation to support food banks and farmers, and combat hunger. It will enhance and strengthen the ability of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier and their counterparts statewide to access nutritious, fresh, high quality, locally produced food.

**Elmira, N.Y., November 21**—Legislation co-sponsored by New York State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) to provide a tax credit of up to \$5,000 to farmers who donate fresh produce to food banks and other emergency food providers has been delivered to Governor Andrew Cuomo for final action.

In early November, **O'Mara and Southern Tier Senator Fred Akshar (R,C,IP-Binghamton) visited the Food Bank of the Southern Tier** to urge Cuomo to sign the measure into law. Akshar is also a co-sponsor along with area Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning)

Commonly known as the "Farm to Food Bank" legislation (**S7833/A10854**), the measure was unanimously approved by the Senate and Assembly in June. Cuomo vetoed the legislation last year, but after addressing the administration's concerns, sponsors of the legislation, including O'Mara and Akshar, and anti-hunger organizations throughout New York are hopeful that the legislation will become law this year. The legislation was delivered to the governor on November 16th and he has until November 28th to act on it.

To raise awareness of the legislation's importance, on November 3rd O'Mara and Akshar participated in a volunteer repack activity where they packed New York State produce to be distributed to people in need through the Food Bank of the Southern Tier's 167 member agencies. They also toured the Food Bank warehouse with Food Bank staff and representatives from member food pantries throughout the Southern Tier.

In the Southern Tier, 72,650 people live below the poverty line, including one in four children. For many people living in poverty, fresh fruits and vegetables are difficult to afford.

"This bill would have a significant impact on the amount of fresh, healthy food that we can distribute," said Natasha Thompson, President & CEO of the Food Bank. "We're grateful that we have elected officials who champion common-sense legislation that supports people

struggling with hunger.”

O'Mara, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, said, "I'm proud to co-sponsor, strongly support and urge Governor Cuomo to sign into law this commonsense 'Farm to Food Bank' legislation to support food banks and farmers, and combat hunger. It will enhance and strengthen the ability of the Food Bank of the Southern Tier and their counterparts statewide to access nutritious, fresh, high quality, locally produced food. Our farmers are already extremely supportive of our food banks, and this tax credit provides a worthwhile incentive for farmers to donate even more. And, most importantly, it will help provide this healthy food for more and more children and families in need. It would be a meaningful addition to the goal of hunger-free communities and we are grateful to everyone at the Food Bank of the Southern Tier for their leadership in achieving this goal."

The Farm to Food Bank law would fill a critical need by increasing the amount of produce available to people struggling with hunger. At the same time, it would support local agriculture and reduce food waste by re-distributing food that might otherwise go uneaten.

Last year, the Food Bank distributed more than 10 million pounds of food, including 1.5 million pounds of fresh produce, throughout six counties in the Southern Tier. Still, the Food Bank would need to distribute an additional 4.7 million meals to feed everyone who is hungry. The Farm to Food Bank bill would allow the Food Bank to distribute more healthy food to those in need.

Those interested in contacting the governor to urge him to sign the “Farm to Food Bank” legislation into law can do so by e-mail at: <http://www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form>. Or contact the governor’s office by phone at 518-474-8390.

The New York Farm Bureau has also posted a convenient online petition letter for supporters of the legislation to send directly to the governor. You can access the online

petition at: [http://capwiz.com/nyfb/issues/alert/?alertid=73202626&type=SW&show\\_alert=1](http://capwiz.com/nyfb/issues/alert/?alertid=73202626&type=SW&show_alert=1)