



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## SCHOOL LUNCH FLUNKS: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE DIRTIEST NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOL CAFETERIAS

JEFFREY D. KLEIN December 1, 2016

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*Independent Democratic Conference to Introduce Legislation to Create a Grading System for School Cafeterias.*

**New York — Senators Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester), Diane Savino (D-Staten Island), Jesse Hamilton (D-Brooklyn), and Senator-elect Marisol Alcantara (D-Manhattan),** joined by New York City School advocates, unveiled a stomach-turning investigative report, “School Lunch Flunks: An Investigation into the Dirtiest New York City Public School Cafeterias” that examined sanitary conditions in cafeterias across the city.

“When parents send their children to school they expect them to be in a safe, cleanly environment throughout the day, including during their lunch period. This report shows that many of the cafeterias in our city schools have racked up numerous health code violations, and that parents have no way of knowing about these violations. If parents can make decisions about the restaurants they frequent based on a letter grade, they should have the same knowledge about where their children eat every day,” **said Senator Klein.**

“As a mother I find it especially concerning that parents have no way of knowing the conditions that exist within their children’s school cafeterias. Our schools should be forthcoming with this information so that parents can feel comfortable knowing where their

child is spending the day. I look forward to working with the IDC to ensure that our children are protected and that their parents know that their children are eating in a clean environment,” **said Senator Alcantara.**

“Over a million students across New York city depend on school cafeterias for breakfast and lunch every school day. This report on cafeterias is especially concerning because parents do not have a choice about where their children eat their school lunch. The restaurant grading system has been a great success in New York’s restaurants, forcing them to clean up their acts and the IDC will work to do the same for school cafeterias in the next session,” **said Senator Savino.**

“Secret inspections conducted by the city’s Department of Health aren’t posted for public consumption, while our students sometimes consume food in filthy cafeterias. We must rid our schools of this lack of transparency for the health and well-being of our children. What we’ve seen since New York City implemented letter grading on restaurants is an astounding turnaround in cleanliness and we expect the same to happen in our schools,” **said Senator Hamilton.**

The investigation focused on data obtained from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s food safety inspection reports of public school cafeterias across New York City.

In the report, IDC analysts assigned letter grades for cafeterias based on the already established letter grading system that is used for restaurants. They found that nearly 15% of the 2,976 school cafeteria inspections would be graded a “B” or “C” in NYC Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-2016. In addition, 61 schools in FY 15-16 that were inspected more than once never earned a score that would have returned an “A” grade.

Among the violations reported, conditions that can lead to vermin infestations and evidence of mice were two of the five most common violations issued against school cafeterias. In FY 15-16 inspectors gave out 442 mice related violations to 320 different school cafeterias, including an inspection at Sixth Avenue Elementary School in Manhattan where inspectors found 400 mice excreta in one inspection.

In addition, the second most common violation for vermin were filth flies. Inspectors in FY 15-16 gave out 155 violations for flies to 136 schools. In one visit to Franklin D. Roosevelt High School in Brooklyn inspectors found 130 flies present.

Also alarming was the number of violations under the classification of “pests,” which are given for conditions that are conducive to pest and vermin infestations, such as holes in walls, gaps between walls and ceilings, and accumulation of dried food waste behind equipment. In FY 15-16 inspectors issued 559 violations for pest conditions to 399 schools.

The Independent Democratic Conference announced legislative solutions to be introduced next session that will require letter grading based on school cafeteria food safety inspections similar to those used in restaurants across New York City so that parents are aware of the conditions of cafeterias in their children’s schools.

"The health and safety of our children must always come first. This is a no-brainer and common sense legislation. We grade restaurants to ensure they comply with health and hygiene regulations to protect the public, we must do the same with our school cafeterias to ensure our children are protected. We thank Senator Klein and the IDC for introducing this legislation to protect our school children," **said Mona Davids, President, New York City Parents Union.**