



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

State Senator George Borrello Joins Colleagues at Queens Food Distribution Site to Urge Governor to Sign Bill Aimed at Making Nourish NY Permanent

GEORGE M. BORRELLO June 17, 2021

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CORONA, Queens — Following its unanimous passage by both houses of the Legislature, New York State Senators George Borrello (R-57th S.D.) and Michelle Hinchey (D-46th S.D.) and Queens Assemblywoman Catalina Cruz (D-39th A.D.) gathered at a weekly food distribution site in Queens to urge the Governor to sign [S.4892/A.5781A](#). The measure would establish the farm-to-food bank initiative, Nourish NY, as a permanent state program.

“Collaboration and compassion were the catalysts for Nourish NY, which emerged as a pandemic lifeline

for food insecure New Yorkers and struggling farmers across the state. Those involved in the effort, from rural farms to urban food banks, quickly realized its tremendous benefits and the push to make it permanent was launched,” said **Senator George Borrello**, Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee and co-prime sponsor of the bill. “While the COVID crisis is ending, the problem of food insecurity is ongoing, which is why it is urgent that the Governor sign this measure into law as soon as possible. This will provide certainty to our agricultural partners and food banks so that they can move ahead with planning their budgets and operations for next year.”

The legislators made the request after volunteering at a weekly food distribution event, which was established at the height of the pandemic in response to overwhelming need. It is sponsored by community organizations La Jornada and the Queens Museum. For the last year, the organizations have paired up to serve up to 1,000 families every Wednesday, distributing fresh and nonperishable food items. La Jornada, which has been supported by Nourish New York and other federal funding sources, has had difficulty obtaining a regular and adequate source of fresh produce and dairy for families. This has caused great uncertainty as to how the organization will address the needs of the thousands of families they support in the area.

The legislation directs the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to provide financial and technical support for the development of a permanent initiative to provide surplus New York agricultural products to communities in need. This distribution will be effectuated through a network of food banks and other emergency food providers statewide. The measure envisions an expansion of the current, pandemic-specific program and would also complement related efforts, such as the Farm-to-School program.

“During one of the darkest moments our state has ever faced, Nourish New York emerged as a beacon of compassionate, bipartisan aid to address the surge in food insecurity and assist our struggling farmers--many of whom had lost up to 50% of their customer base,” said **Senator Michelle Hinchey**, bill sponsor and Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. “Nourish New York demonstrates what’s possible when we work together--regardless of party or geography--to help our communities survive. Connecting the dots between families in need and farmers looking to reach new markets is the kind of innovation we want for the long term. Now that both houses of the legislature have unanimously passed our bill to make this great state program a permanent fixture, we need to get it signed into law. I thank my partners in government, Assemblymember Catalina Cruz and Senator George Borrello for their leadership as we continue to forge strong upstate and downstate partnerships to ensure that no New Yorker is left behind in their time of need.”

“At the height of the pandemic, food lines stretched for miles with no end in sight and without a permanent or sustainable product source. My district was the epicenter of the epicenter, and without a permanent food pantry, we watched as our food insecurity issues only became more severe. This bill provides a state pipeline to put food on the table to those who need it most. While the districts that Senators Hinchey and Borrello and I represent are hundreds of miles apart, our constituents share commonality in their dependence on each other for survival. I am proud of all of our hard work on this bipartisan measure, which received unanimous support in both houses, and I look forward to the Governor signing the bill into law,” said **Assemblywoman Cruz**, sponsor of the bill in the Assembly.

The Nourish New York initiative was launched in April of 2020, in response to the surge of people in need at food banks across the state, as well as the hardships facing farmers affected by supply chain disruptions. With an initial \$25 million in state funding, the program directed the purchase of food and products from upstate farms and food producers for distribution to food banks across the state. Another \$10 million was allocated to the program in late October to sustain the program through the end of the year, and an additional \$50 million in state funding was secured in April of 2021.

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