

News from Senator George M. Borrello

57th Senate District

Representing Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and portions of Livingston County

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LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH “NOURISH NY” AS PERMANENT STATE PROGRAM PASSES THE SENATE

Farm to food bank program born out of pandemic-fueled economic and supply chain disruptions has been priority for Senator Borrello following statewide fall farm tours

ALBANY – Senator George Borrello, Ranking Member on the Senate Agriculture Committee, lauded the Senate’s passage of legislation establishing the farm-to-food bank program, Nourish NY, as a permanent state program. The measure’s advance marked important progress toward a goal the Senator embraced after receiving positive feedback from farmers last fall as well as from food banks both in and outside his district.

“One of the positive outcomes to emerge from the difficult chapter of the past year has been Nourish NY. This important innovation simultaneously addressed the critical needs of two groups of struggling New Yorkers who were economic casualties of our state’s sudden shutdown,” said Senator Borrello.

“Many of us will never forget the images of desperate New Yorkers standing in line for hours at food pantries in order to obtain provisions that would feed their families for a few days. When stories of farmers having to dump milk and abandon their crops because of fractured supply chains then came to light, the impetus to create a state initiated farm-to-food bank system was born. Over the past 11 months, that effort has grown into a vital new channel for moving fresh, nutritious New York farm products to those in need,” he added.

Launched in April of 2020 with an initial \$25 million in state funding, the program has been administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets and has distributed food from over 4,000 farms to over 1.3 million households in need. Subsequent allocations of state support have been provided to sustain the initiative as the pandemic and economic recovery continues. Altogether, the program has received \$60 million in state support since its inception.

“During a discussion with Assembly Member Catalina Cruz on one of our farm tours, we noted the positive impact of the program on our respective districts – hers in Queens and mine in Western New York. We decided that advocating to make this program permanent was the natural next step,” Senator Borrello said. “That effort picked up momentum when Senator Michelle Hinchey, Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, chose to champion the bill as a primary sponsor and has helped lead the measure forward. I look forward to continuing to work with both of them to get this across the finish line.”

“The Nourish New York program has been a silver lining in a very dark time, giving farmers the relief they needed as their markets were disrupted and providing locally grown, farm-fresh food to people facing extreme food insecurity, said Senator Michelle Hinchey. “This program epitomizes the best of New York, showing that we’re strongest when we work together to solve problems across our state, regardless of party or geography. New York is an Ag state, and strengthening our regional food supply systems benefits all of us. As Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I am proud to give this great state program the permanence it deserves and thankful to Assembly sponsor, Assemblywoman Catalina Cruz (D-Queens) and prime co-sponsor Senator George Borrello (R-Sunset Bay), for their partnership.”

[Senate Bill 4892](#) would codify the program in Section 452 of the Agriculture and Markets Law and direct the agency to facilitate the provision of surplus agricultural products to food banks as well as provide technical assistance and information. The measure would also review the Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) and direct Ag & Markets to review and report on the need to establish a grant program for cold storage equipment purchases for food banks.

“This is a great accomplishment. It is compassionate, innovative, bi-partisan and critically needed. It is an example of government at its best.”

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