



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

October 9, 2020

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12237

Subject: New York State Farm to School Program

Dear Governor Cuomo:

On behalf of the New York State Senate Republican Conference, we write to express our alarm at reports of forthcoming administrative policy that would hamper the highly successful Farm to School Incentive program.

Specifically, we are concerned that possible changes will result in a loss of eligibility for the state's Farm to School Incentive program for half of all schools in New York. This will undoubtedly have devastating consequences for children, families, farmers, schools, and the state's agricultural economy.

According to information provided by *New York Grown Food for New York Kids*, the consequences of this decision would include:

- Increased food insecurity for families and children;
- Another nail in the coffin for New York's struggling farmers; and
- An irreparable loss of faith between schools and the Farm to School program.

Combined with the exacerbating circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, heaps of red tape foisted upon farmers in recent years, and record unemployment levels, New York families and farmers have been through enough crisis this year alone to last a lifetime.

Agriculture is arguably the most important industry in New York, and every family and child in our state is its biggest beneficiary. When Senate Republicans held the Majority, we worked with the School Nutrition Association to adopt language in the state budget that provided an additional incentive for districts to source food from in-state growers and producers. We cannot afford to go back at a precise time when we should be moving forward to expand this program.

As the saying goes, *No Farms No Food*. What happens when all the farms are permanently gone from New York due to decisions like these or when a child's nutrition at the lunch table is irreversibly upended? My Senate Republican Colleagues and I respectfully call on you to address this matter and reverse course to save the Farm to School Incentive program for the sake of all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Ort
Republican Conference and Minority Leader
New York State Senate

CC:

Richard Ball, Commissioner, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
Betty Rosa, Acting Commissioner, New York State Department of Education



Senator Fredrick Akshar, SD 52



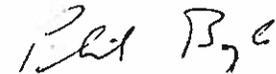
Senator Michael Ranzenhofer, SD 61



Senator George Borello, SD 57



Senator Patty Ritchie, SD 48



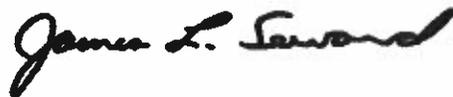
Senator Phil Boyle, SD 4



Senator Sue Serino, SD41



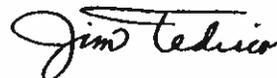
Senator Patrick Gullivan, SD 59



Senator James Seward, SD 51



Senator Joseph Griffo, SD 47



Senator Jim Tedisco, SD 49



Senator Daphne Jordon, SD 43