



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 610

Resolution calling on the New York State legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.1678A/A.1941, which would require all public school districts, charter schools, and non-public schools to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to students.

By Council Members Lee, Cabán, Restler, Richardson Jordan, Brewer, Hanif, Ung and Riley

Whereas, The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as the lack of access to nutrition necessary for an active, healthy life; and

Whereas, According to scientific studies, children in food-insecure households are more likely to experience developmental issues, to have more chronic health conditions, higher hospitalization rates, poorer mental health, and academic and behavioral problems; and

Whereas, Per the USDA, as of 2018, an estimated 11.2 million, or 15.2 percent, of American children resided in food-insecure households; and

Whereas, The USDA estimated that as of 2020, nearly 14 million or 10.5 percent of U.S. households were food-insecure; and

Whereas, According to the same data, in 2020, the rate of food insecurity among households with children was higher than the national average at 14.8 percent, an increase from 13.6 percent in 2019; and

Whereas, As per the same 2020 estimates, Black, non-Hispanic, and Hispanic U.S. households had much higher prevalence of food insecurity, standing at 21.7 percent and 17.2 percent, respectively, and contrasted with the national average of 10.5 percent; and

Whereas, In New York State, as of 2020, 596,060, or 14.6 percent, of children were food insecure, but only 85 percent of them were income-eligible for federal nutrition programs; and

Whereas, In New York State, as of 2020, the prevalence of food insecurity was much higher among Black and Latino individuals, standing at 19 percent for each and contrasted with 5 percent among White, non-Hispanic individuals; and

Whereas, In New York City, as of 2020, the Bronx had the highest rate of all five boroughs of food insecurity among children at 36.3 percent (128,740 children), only 86 percent of whom were income-eligible for federal nutrition programs; and

Whereas, In New York City, as of 2020, Brooklyn had the second highest prevalence of food insecurity among children at 26 percent (152,960 children), only 81 percent of whom were income-eligible for federal nutrition programs; and

Whereas, A 2019 study of New York City's middle schools providing free lunch and breakfast for all students irrespective of income discovered that universal provision of free meals improved students' weight outcomes, increased school lunch participation, and improved math and English test scores; and

Whereas, As of 2022, an estimated 470,000 children in New York State were income-ineligible for free school meals even though they resided in households earning less than a living wage; and

Whereas, Only 59 percent of New York schools offered free meals for all students as of 2022; and

Whereas, Estimates by Feeding New York State indicate that a statewide universal free school meals program in New York State would improve access to food for about 726,000 students by enabling 1,954 additional schools to provide free school meals to all pupils; and

Whereas, According to the same estimates by Feeding New York State, a universal free school meals program would also relieve financial pressure on families by saving an estimated \$140 per child in grocery costs each month; and

Whereas, With the intent of reducing child food insecurity, State Senator Michelle Hinchey has introduced S.1678A in the New York State Senate, and Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas has introduced companion bill A.1941 in the New York State Assembly, which would require all public school

districts, charter schools, and non-public schools to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to students; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York State legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.1678A/A.1941, which would require all public school districts, charter schools, and non-public schools to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to students.

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