

December 19, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York
State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

We, the undersigned, urge you to issue an executive order to establish healthy food service guidelines for all state facilities and state-supported programs. We further urge you to include funding for the New York State Department of Health to lead implementation of healthy food service guidelines in the FY2024 Executive Budget.

Too many New York residents struggle to eat healthfully. Poor diet is linked to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases, which are among the leading causes of death in New York State.¹ The causes of poor diet quality at the population level are complex and multi-factorial, but one critical point of intervention is the food environment.

Though New York State agencies purchase, serve, and sell food to millions of employees, visitors, students, recipients of state services, and people in state custody, the state currently does *not* have a comprehensive policy ensuring the healthfulness of the food purchased, served, or sold across all state agencies, facilities, and programs.

As recommended by the New York State Food Policy Council² and the New York Academy of Medicine,³ establishing nutrition guidelines for state agencies could promote healthier diets for millions of New Yorkers. We will be living with COVID-19 for the foreseeable future, so keeping New Yorkers healthy should be a state priority.

Adopting guidelines for food procurement also provides an opportunity to support New York State food producers. To the extent that the guidelines promote healthy, fresh, minimally processed food products grown in New York State, they would further leverage public spending to enhance the economic viability of local farms and the regional food system.

Most importantly, New Yorkers *want* state agencies to serve more healthy and local food. In a poll of 1,000 state residents commissioned by the Center for Science in the Public Interest in September 2020, 71% said the food that state-supported programs and institutions serve should include mostly or only healthy options; 88% said they would favor the state adopting guidelines for state-supported programs and institutions to serve more healthy foods; 65% said they would favor the state adopting guidelines for state-supported programs and institutions to serve fewer unhealthy foods; and 85% said they would favor

¹ New York State Department of Health. New York State Leading Causes of Death. January 2022. https://apps.health.ny.gov/public/tabvis/PHIG_Public/lcd/reports/#state.

² A Report and Recommendations by the Workgroup on Food Procurement Guidelines to the New York State Council on Food Policy. September 2012. https://www.albany.edu/cphce/prevention_agenda/ns_fp_guidelines.pdf.

³ The New York Academy of Medicine. Policy Brief: Healthy Food Procurement Policy for New York State. March 2012. https://nyam.org/media/filer_public/82/0d/820d460d-9c05-48c3-b44b-fad6511bf5da/healthyfoodprocurementpolicy.pdf.

a goal that state-supported institutions and programs spend 25% of their food dollars on healthy food produced by New York State farms, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and milk.

The *Biden-Harris Administration National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health*, launched in September 2022, calls for state, local, and territorial governments to adopt food service guidelines in public facilities.⁴ New York City was the first major city in the country to set nutrition standards for all foods purchased or served by the city in 2008. By adopting healthy food service guidelines at the state level, New York would continue lead the country in leveraging public purchasing power to promote healthy diets.

Responses may be directed to Jessi Silverman of the Center for Science in the Public Interest at jsilverman@cpsinet.org.

Sincerely,

Alianza Agricola
Bronx Health REACH
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Chilis on Wheels
Community Food Advocates
Correctional Association of New York
Earthjustice
God's Love We Deliver
Health Care Without Harm
Hudson Valley Food System Coalition
Impact Justice
Interfaith Public Health Network
Island Harvest Food Bank
Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education, & Policy, Columbia University
New York State Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
New York State Public Health Association
Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
Providence Farm Collective Corp
Rock Steady Farm
St. Peter's Health Partners
Teens for Food Justice
West Side Campaign Against Hunger

⁴ Biden-Harris Administration National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. September 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/White-House-National-Strategy-on-Hunger-Nutrition-and-Health-FINAL.pdf>.