The New York School Nutrition Association (NYSNA) is a membership organization representing over 4,000 school nutrition employees, managers, directors, registered dieticians, nutritionists, and industry members committed to ensuring that all students have access to healthy meals. Collectively, we help provide 2.2 million nutritious meals to students in New York Schools each day. NYSNA has two legislative priorities for the 2020-2021 budget, both aimed at ensuring all children in New York schools have access to nutritional meals.

NYSNA proposes an increase in the poverty threshold for reduced-price meals from 185% to 200% Sadly, 21% of New York children live in poverty, and more than one in three children are near poverty.[[1]](#footnote-1) Expanding access to reduced-price meals would ensure that the nutritional needs of all New York Students are being met. Based on 30% of students eating breakfast and 60% of students eating lunch each day, we estimate **that this would cost the state approximately $8 million to feed these students.**

* With an increased threshold, approximately 19,000 children would qualify for reduced-price meals.
* This number does not include students in New York City nor those students whose school districts participate in the Community Eligible Provision.
* The 200% threshold is currently already in use by the Head Start and TANF programs.
* This idea builds on New York’s past successes in safeguarding against child hunger such as this year’s initiative whereby the State assumed the student cost of reduced-price meals, relieving a major burden on many struggling New York families.

NYSNA proposes transferring the Child Nutrition Program (CNP) from the New York State Education Department (SED) to the New York Department of Agriculture & Markets (Ag. & Markets)

The CNP encompasses six federal school food programs[[2]](#footnote-2), some of which are supplemented by New York funding. Currently the CNP is administered by SED. Unfortunately, due to SED’s size and necessary emphasis on education programs, the CNP can get overlooked. Ag. & Markets however, focuses on the production of fresh food and is the logical place to house a program dedicated to child nutrition.

* In addition to working directly with NY’s food producers, Ag. & Markets already takes the lead for the NY School Milk Task Force, the NY State Farm to School Coordinating Committee, the Farm to School Grants, and the Governor’s Council on Hunger and Food Policy.
* The CNP is administered via the U.S. Department of Agriculture and is more in-line with the work that Ag. & Markets already does.
* New York would join New Jersey, Florida, Nevada, and Texas as the fifth state to have their Agriculture & Markets agency administer and oversee the CNP.
* These four states have reported that the CNP is a greater priority under Ag. & Markets, which has helped enhance connections with farmers and solve various distribution challenges.

***The New York School Nutrition Association thanks you for continually prioritizing the nutritional health and wellbeing of students. We urge you to include the $8 million in the 2020-21 state budget, raise the poverty threshold from 185% to 200%, and transfer the Child Nutrition Program to the New York Department of Agriculture & Markets. These proposals will produce positive benefits for New York’s students, schools, and families.***

1. *The State of New York’s Children*, Databook 2019, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy; January 2019; p. 3-4 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The six federal programs are: National School Lunch Program, National Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program, Afterschool Snack Program, Special Milk Program, and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)