



# Community Education Council For District One

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## 12-09-15 201516 RESO 02:

### **RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF FREE AND HEALTHY SCHOOL LUNCH FOR ALL NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS**

**WHEREAS**, federal law allows New York City to make healthy school lunches universally free for every public school student; and

**WHEREAS**, New York City is not taking advantage of the great opportunity in making healthy school lunches universally free for every public school student; and

**WHEREAS**, universal free lunch benefits students, families, and the local economy; and

**WHEREAS**, the need for universally free school lunches is clear; and

**WHEREAS**, one in every four New York City children lives in a household that lacks sufficient food; and

**WHEREAS**, the consequences of childhood hunger are dire: hunger negatively impacts children's learning ability and health; and

**WHEREAS**, school meals are a critical tool in the fight against hunger, but, because of the way the program is currently administered, only about 65% of NYC children eligible for free or reduced-price lunch eat it; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2013, 250,000 out of 780,000 students eligible for free or reduced price meals did not participate in the subsidized school lunch program. Many more students are above income eligibility for free or reduced priced lunch, yet are in families that are struggling to makes ends meet. Additionally, currently, 81% of elementary school students eat school lunch; it drops to 61% in middle school; and 38% in high school; and

**WHEREAS**, hundreds of thousands of students in New York City public schools do not participate in federally funded school lunch due to the program's poverty stigma. Many of these students, especially as they get older, go without eating school lunch for fear of being labeled poor by their peers, with long-lasting health and educational consequences. If more students participated, more nutritious choices could be offered, and the stigma would be eliminated. An astonishing 68 percent of New York City's 1.1 million public school children have family incomes low enough to be eligible for free school lunch (below \$25,000 for a household of three). Seventy five percent have incomes that qualify them for either free or reduced priced meals; and

**WHEREAS**, some income-eligible children are not enrolled in the free or reduced-price lunch program because their parents are hesitant to submit the paperwork. Parents are concerned about sharing personal financial information, in addition to language barriers, immigration status or do not know about the program; and

**WHEREAS**, making lunch universally free to all students eliminates all of these barriers and ensures all New York City public school children have access to a healthy lunch; and

**WHEREAS**, students must be well-nourished to learn; and

**WHEREAS**, as of September 2014, the city has committed to spend an additional \$6.25 million a year so that all 160,000 students in the sixth through eighth grades will qualify for free breakfast and lunch without requiring parents to certify that their income is 130 percent of the \$30,615 poverty level for a family of four; and

**WHEREAS**, Chancellor Fariña indicated that free lunches will only be offered to the stand alone middle school students in grades six through eight; and

**WHEREAS**, The New York City Department of Education is committed to providing and ensuring that school meals provide students with access to a variety, nutritious, and enticing foods that meet their health and nutritional needs.

**WHEREAS**, by expanding the program, advocates seek to eliminate the stigma that keep many children who qualify for the free lunches from receiving them; and

**WHEREAS**, the Community Education Council for District 1 believes that New York City should take advantage of all the federal options available to provide free meals, and that the city should make the investment needed so that no student has to pay for a meal;

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Community Education Council for District 1 wants to ensure that more children eat healthy school meals by making them free for all, regardless of income or immigration status; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Community Education Council for District 1 calls upon Mayor Bill de Blasio and Governor Andrew Cuomo to make school lunch free for all students in New York City schools irrespective of the income levels of their parents.

Resolution adopted by a roll call vote of Community Education Council for District 1 on 12/9/2015