



New York State
**School Boards
Association**

Better School Boards Lead to Better Student Performance

24 Century Hill Drive, Suite 200
Latham, New York 12110-2125
Tel: 518.783.0200 | Fax: 518.783.0211
www.nyssba.org

November 16, 2017

MaryEllen Elia
Commissioner of Education
NY State Education Building
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Commissioner Elia,

On behalf of the New York State School Boards Association I am writing at this time to request an increase in the state reimbursement rate for school lunches.

In 2008, New York State was in the midst of the recession and faced a significant budget deficit. This led to cuts being made in nearly every area of the budget to help the state fill the shortfall in revenue. These cuts included a reduction in the appropriation for the NYS school lunch and breakfast reimbursements. The school lunch reimbursement rates for the 2008-09 school year were reduced by 2%, with an additional 6% rate reduction later in the same year. These cuts have never been restored, leaving the reimbursement rates at \$0.0599 for free and paid lunches and \$0.1981 for reduced price lunches.

Since the reduction, the state's economy has rebounded. Cuts have been restored and in many cases funding for programs has increased. The budget appropriation for the school lunch and breakfast programs has increased 10.73% since 2008. Despite the increase in the appropriation, the rate has remained flat. This has resulted in approximately \$4.4 million of state money appropriated to fund lunch and breakfast programs being swept into the general fund. Raising the reimbursement rates would enable the state to spend its full appropriation amount on school lunch and breakfast programs as was intended.

Additionally, the low reimbursement rates combined with increasing food costs limit the purchasing power of school lunch programs, especially in districts with high numbers of free and reduced price meals being served. The state has a vested interest in ensuring that students are eating healthy food in school; many studies show the importance of proper nourishment for student success.

Therefore, as the Department works to set future reimbursement rates, NYSSBA urges you to increase the reimbursement rate for school lunches. If you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Governmental Relations at (518) 783-0200.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy G. Kremer", is written over a white background.

Timothy G. Kremer
Executive Director
New York State School Boards Association

Cc: Beth Berlin