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Testimony Prepared for the

**Joint Legislative Hearing on the FY 2018-19 Executive Budget
Elementary and Secondary Education**

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Thank you Senator Young, Assemblywoman Weinstein, and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Mark Bordeau and I am the Senior Food Service Director for Broome Tioga BOCES, as well as the current Vice President of the New York School Nutrition Association. I am here today on behalf of the 4,400 plus members of the New York School Nutrition Association to discuss a proposal we have that would increase the per meal reimbursement rate, for the first time since in almost 40 years while also incentivizing school nutrition programs to purchase local New York food products.

The New York School Nutrition Association (NYSNA), is a membership organization which represents over 4,400 school nutrition employees, managers, directors, registered dietitians, nutritionists, and industry members, and we respectfully request that you increase funding for the Farm-to-School program.

Our ask is simple: Increase the state reimbursement rate for school lunch meals to \$00.25 for school districts that purchased at least 30% of the previous year's total cost of food products for reimbursable lunches from New York state farmers, growers, producers or processors.

For the past 40 years, New York State has not increased its' school meal reimbursement rate of \$00.06 per meal. The lack of an increase has left schools cutting costs to the detriment of New York's farms and local economies. For instance, the last time New York raised its school meal reimbursement rate, the minimum wage was \$2.65. Today, the minimum wage is at least \$10.40. The impact is clear. New York has forced its schools to purchase the majority of its food from out of state to deal with rising food costs.

Through its members, NYSNA serves approximately 1.7 million school lunches and 500,000 breakfasts each day. Our purchasing power is immense. If New York increases its school lunch reimbursement rate to \$00.25 for each school district that purchases 30% or more of the food on every lunch tray served from New York State, the state's economic impact could reach \$1.6 billion.

Let's continue to revitalize New York's economy and feed our children better!

On behalf of our 4,400 members, please increase funds for the Farm to School Program.

Thank you.

The State of Oregon realized a return of \$2.16 and 1.67 jobs for every dollar it spent on its expanded Farm to School Program. Sobell, Stacey, The impact of Seven Cents, Ecotrust,2011. See: https://ecotrust.org/media/7-Cents-Report_FINAL_110630.pdf