



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SERINO AND MORELLE TEAM UP TO CURB FOOD WASTE EPIDEMIC

SUSAN SERINO June 9, 2017

| ISSUE: **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, FOOD SECURITY**



ALBANY, NY—With food waste making up the single largest material found in U.S. landfills and waste incinerators, Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) and Assembly Majority Leader Joseph D. Morelle (D-Irondequoit) have teamed up to make New York an environmental leader in combatting waste. The pair have recently introduced legislation that would incentivize the food industry to take an active role in curbing the food waste epidemic by providing tax credits to those who donate their surplus food to local food banks

and/or pantries.

“With a nationwide hunger crisis impacting individuals, families and seniors across the country, fresh food should be feeding hungry New Yorkers, not our landfills,” said Senator Sue Serino. “This bill will not only cut down on food waste that is wreaking havoc on our environment, it will help to increase access to the fresh, nutritional ingredients that are essential to healthy living. It’s a win for the economy, for the environment and most importantly, for our community members in need.”

“This is common-sense legislation that will not only help diminish unnecessary waste, it will also provide invaluable resources to aid struggling families throughout our communities,” said Morelle. “We are taking a critical step towards making New York State a leader in the fight to end hunger. I am grateful to Senator Serino for her partnership on this important issue and my colleagues in the legislature for their continued commitment to uplifting those most in need.”

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, between thirty and forty percent of the nation’s food supply goes to waste. To put those numbers in perspective, a 2016 report by The Guardian notes that Americans throw away over 60 million tons of food, worth over \$100 billion. These figures are even more staggering when it is taken into account that one in eight New Yorkers struggle with hunger. In a state where three million people—and among them, one million children—rely on nutrition assistance programs, it is clear that we need to be doing more to ensure that those in need have access to nutritious food.

Further, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) notes that reducing food waste will play a significant role in helping to address climate change as it currently accounts for almost a quarter of methane emissions coming out of our nation’s landfills. This legislation is yet another affirmation that our state continues to take a leadership role in the fight to protect our environment.

Specifically, the bill (S. 6083A/A. 8138) would establish a tax credit for grocery stores, food brokers, wholesalers, restaurateurs, or catering services that donate surplus or about-to-waste food to local banks and/or pantries. The legislation aims to encourage a collaborative

relationship between New York's food industry and community organizations to increase awareness about the need for fresh food to help fight hunger across the state.

Danny Wegman, Chairman, Wegmans Food Markets, Inc. said, *"There's an abundance of food in our country, yet every community is faced with people who are food insecure. We feel strongly about doing our part to reduce hunger, and for us that means donating excess food whenever possible. Each of our stores has local food pantries picking up perishable food donations each week. We encourage others to look for ways to start or improve their donation practices, because when we all work together, our communities thrive."*

Julia Tedesco, Executive Director, Foodlink, said, *"Reducing food waste is critical to reforming our broken food system and ensuring that everyone has access to enough healthy food. The high levels of food insecurity we see in our communities is a moral crisis that needs to be eliminated and this bill will hopefully provide an additional source of nutritious food for the clients who rely on emergency food to feed themselves and their families."*

Patrick Adams, CEO, Adams Fairacre Farms, said, *"Our company, and the retail food industry in general, has a long history of partnerships with food pantries and food banks. This legislation would provide an added incentive to make sure that no food goes to waste."*

Debbie Evans, President & Executive Director, Irondequoit Community Cupboard, said: *"The Irondequoit Community Cupboard is not surprised to see that Assembly Majority Leader Joe Morelle is taking on this issue. He has been a longtime supporter of our food pantry in Irondequoit NY, he has been instrumental as a Chairman of the Anti-Poverty initiative here in Monroe County, and I have known him to be passionate about all those who struggling in NY state. This is an amazing way to get more food to emergency providers like ours by giving local businesses an incentive to donate their surplus food. In doing so, not only is he helping people in need of assistance now, but he is also improving the future generation by creating a better environment for everyone. These are both national issues and I am so proud that Assembly Majority Leader Joe Morelle and Senator Sue Serino are tackling these tough problems here at home and in NY state."*

Elizabeth Spira, Chief Executive Officer of Community Action Partnership, a Hudson Valley not-for-profit that operates four food pantries across Dutchess County, said, *"Families across our communities are working tirelessly to meet their nutritional needs. Our finances are stretched thin and our assets are limited, so any additional support will play a major role in ensuring that those in need have access to*

fresh, healthy food. I thank Senator Serino and Assemblyman Morelle for taking on this challenge and thinking outside of the box to strengthen community relationships and to help our community thrive."