



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John W. Mannion

Senator Mannion Calls On State Education Department And Ag And Markets To Ensure Students Have Access To Milk At School Amid Nationwide Carton Shortage

JOHN W. MANNION October 30, 2023

| ISSUE: **SCHOOL MEALS, CHILDREN'S HEALTH, PUBLIC SCHOOLS, NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

SYRACUSE, NY – Senator John W. Mannion (Geddes) today called on the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the New York State Education Department to ensure students have access to milk at school amid a nationwide carton shortage.

Senator John W. Mannion said, “As one of the largest dairy producers in the country, it's unfathomable that students in the State of New York would go without milk at school. As a public school teacher for almost thirty years and a strong advocate for the recently enacted universal school meals program, I know students learn best with proper nutrition and healthy eating, including milk. I commend the districts that have sought other avenues to provide milk despite a nationwide carton shortage and I am calling on State Education and Ag & Markets to step in and make sure every student in New York has access to healthy and nutritious milk.”

According to the Department of Agriculture and Markets, the dairy industry is the largest single segment of New York's agricultural industry. The state has more than 3,500 dairy farms, is the fifth largest producer of milk, and is the largest producer of yogurt and cottage

cheese. The dairy community in New York includes both large dairy operations and small, family run farms. It also boasts processing facilities of various types and sizes, from major global processing companies to small artisanal dairy product makers.

Read Senator Mannion's letter:

October 30, 2023

Commissioner Betty A. Rosa

New York State Education Department

New York State Education Building

89 Washington Avenue

Albany, NY 12234

Commissioner Richard Ball

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

10B Airline Drive

Albany, NY 12235

Dear Commissioner Rosa & Commissioner Ball,

I respectfully urge the State Education Department (SED) and the Department of Agriculture and Markets (AGM) to immediately step in and ensure students have access to

milk in schools. As you may know, school districts in Upstate New York, including in Central New York, which I represent, were informed last Friday of a nationwide shortage of milk cartons. This nationwide shortage may prevent schools from serving milk as soon as this week. SED and AGM must work with school districts and school nutrition operators to find solutions to ensure milk is continued to be served to students.

Students should not be deprived of access to milk due to lack of packaging. Milk has been shown to provide numerous health benefits for children. Oftentimes milk alternatives in schools are sugary high processed drinks providing little to no nutrition for students. New York is the 5th largest producer of milk in the United States, producing over 15 billion pounds of milk annually. New York is also home to over 3,500 dairy farms, creating the largest agricultural sector in New York.

I respectfully urge the State Education Department and the Department of Agriculture and Markets to immediately communicate with school districts across the state and ensure students have access to milk and that dairy products are not wasted due to lack of packaging. Both Departments must work with school districts who are looking for alternatives to procure milk and serve milk within state guidelines.

If you have a question or need assistance, please contact my office at 315-428-7632 or mannion@nysenate.gov.

Sincerely,

John W. Mannion

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