



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

## Senator Helming Announces Signing of Bill to Allow Local Food Buying

[JONATHAN MONFILETTO - 315-568-9816](#) July 24, 2017

Senator Pamela Helming (R,C,I-Canandaigua) today announced that Governor Andrew Cuomo has signed a bill that she sponsored that allows local BOCES and municipalities to directly purchase New York State-produced foods. Senator Helming made this announcement during the Food Access and Health in Rural NY roundtable discussion that she hosted Friday at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva.

Current law allows state agencies to spend up to \$200,000 annually to purchase locally grown foods without going through formal procurement procedures. School districts are similarly authorized to spend up to a multiplier based on enrollment and school days, but local governments are limited to a \$20,000 annual threshold for the purchase of local products.

This bill, S.5251B, extends similar exemptions to BOCES and municipalities. It provides for a multiplier threshold to purchase New York State food products modeled after the way school districts buy such items.

“This is a great way to continue to expand opportunities to bring local food into our local communities and school districts and make this practice a part of our culture, as it should be. This supports not only our communities and schools but also our local producers and

growers. I am so glad that we were able to come to an agreement on this important legislation and that the Governor has signed it into law," Senator Helming said.

The New York Farm Bureau also hailed Senator Helming's work to sponsor and pass this bill and the Governor's signing of the legislation. This law will now streamline the procurement process through which local BOCES and municipalities can purchase more local food from farmers in their areas.

"This legislation will benefit many, from the students who will have more fresh, healthy food on their lunch table to the farmers who will have an expanded market to sell what they grow. In addition, it is positive for the rural economy as more taxpayer dollars are used to support local businesses. New York Farm Bureau would like to thank Senator Pamela Helming for her leadership and support of this great bill," New York Farm Bureau President David Fisher said.

Senator Helming also announced during Friday's roundtable discussion that this year's New York State budget includes \$750,000 for the New York State Farm to School Program, which was created to connect school districts with local farms and food producers in order to allow students to eat locally grown, freshly picked fruits and vegetables with their meals during the school day. This allocation represents an increase of \$500,000 over last year.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm to School census, 298 school districts – representing 43 percent of New York school districts – with 1,333 schools and 759,024 students participate in Farm to School. This year, three more schools from New York City, the Capital Region, and Jefferson County joined the program. The next application cycle starts in the fall, with a due date in December.

“With this funding that I fought for, we are helping schools provide students with nutritious meals from foods produced by local farms and food processors. Again, this is a program that supports both our local school districts as well as our local growers and producers. I am so proud that we were able to so significantly increase the funding for Farm to School,” Senator Helming said.

*Senator Helming represents the 54<sup>th</sup> Senate District, which consists of Seneca and Wayne Counties, parts of Cayuga and Ontario Counties, and the towns of Lansing and Webster. For more information, please visit Senator Helming’s [website](#), or follow @SenatorHelming on Facebook or Twitter.*

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