



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## O'Mara co-sponsoring legislation to encourage donations from food industry through tax credit modeled after successful 'Farm to Food Bank' initiative

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 5, 2020

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**Elmira, N.Y., February 5**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) is co-sponsoring legislation to incentivize New York's food industry to cut down on food waste by donating

their surpluses to local food banks and pantries.

Food waste makes up the single largest material found in landfills and sent to waste incinerators in the United States.

“We need to keep taking commonsense actions like this one to stop perfectly good, fresh, nutritious food from ending up in landfills and waste incinerators and, at the same time, to help combat hunger,” said O’Mara, former Chair and current member of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee.

In 2017, O’Mara joined other legislators and anti-hunger advocates, including the **Food Bank of the Southern Tier**, to help secure the enactment in the 2017-2018 state budget of a tax credit of up to \$5,000 to farmers who donate fresh produce to food banks and other emergency food providers – commonly known as the “Farm to Food Bank” tax credit to help offset the cost of picking, packaging, and delivering the fresh produce to food banks and pantries.

The tax credit has had a positive impact, O’Mara said. In December 2018, for example, the New York Farm Bureau announced that state farmers donated nearly 11 million pounds of fresh food and farm products to regional food banks. That amount was up by close to two million pounds from the year before and equalled about nine million meals.

O’Mara said that the latest legislative proposal he co-sponsors would build on that action. Specifically, the legislation (**S.1241**) would establish a tax credit of up to \$5,000 for grocery stores, food brokers, wholesalers, restauranteurs, or catering services that donate surplus or about-to-waste food to local food banks and pantries.

The United States Department of Agriculture has estimated that between thirty and forty percent of the nation’s food supply goes to waste. Additionally, the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reported that food waste currently accounts for nearly a

quarter of methane emissions from the nation's landfills.

O'Mara helped celebrate The Food Bank of the Southern Tier's designation as the 2017 "Food Bank of the Year" by Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization.

The Food Bank of the Southern Tier serves seven regional counties -- Broome, Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga and Tompkins -- covering nearly 4,000 square miles. The organization serves nearly 19,000 people weekly through approximately 160 partner agencies, including food pantries, meal programs, shelters, and after-school and senior programs.