



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

## NYS Senate Republicans Fight to Save the Farm to School Incentive Program

ROBERT G. ORTT October 9, 2020

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE, SCHOOL LUNCHES**



ALBANY, NY – New York State Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt and members of the Senate Republican Conference today sent a letter to Governor Cuomo asking for clarity and a reverse course on any potential changes to the highly successful Farm to School Incentive program. Recent information provided by stakeholders suggests that forthcoming Executive policy will result in half of all New York schools losing eligibility for the program.

“Long championed by the Senate Republican Conference, the Farm to School Incentive program should be a shining example of how we can do good for our communities as elected leaders. The program helps families and children struggling with food insecurity. It helps struggling farmers who have been drowning in New York overregulation for years. And it helps schools put locally sourced food on the table for a bargain. It’s not too late, Governor Cuomo – you can and should reverse course to save the Farm to School Incentive program for the sake of all New Yorkers,” said Senate Republican Leader Ortt.

“Agriculture is one of the most important industries in our great state. We know that even the tiniest seeds of investment we plant as state lawmakers can return massive yields for all New Yorkers. I hope the administration reconsiders this potential change, because farmers, families, and schoolchildren cannot afford for us to go back at the precise time we should be moving forward to expand this program,” said Senator George Borrello, Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture.

“In story after heartbreaking story, we have witnessed the plight of food insecurity spread throughout our state this year. Whether it’s long lines at food banks or record unemployment rates, it is clear that New York families and children have been through enough crises this year to last a lifetime. The last thing parents need to worry about right now is what their children eat at the lunch table. Significant changes to the Farm to School program would not only harm our farmers and schools, but the families and children who rely on them,” said Senator Jim Tedisco, Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Children and Families.

According to information provided by New York Grown Food for New York Kids, the potential changes to the Farm to School Incentive would result in increased food insecurity, another crippling blow to New York’s already-struggling farmers, and an irreparable loss of faith between school districts and the program. Combined with the exacerbating

circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, **heaps of red tape** recently thrust upon small farmers, and a dismal state economic outlook, a policy change that renders half of all schools ineligible for Farm to School would mean more dire outcomes for New York farms and families.

While in the Majority, Senate Republicans worked with the School Nutrition Association to adopt language in the state budget that provided an additional incentive for districts to source food from in-state growers and producers.

###