



MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

March 26, 2021

Art 2 Title 8 §§269 - 269-b, of the Public Health Law for the 2021-2022 proposed Legislative Section (A5682 Gottfried/S4644 Biaggi): Enacts the healthy food service guidelines for New York act of 2021.

Background: A healthy diet should be attainable regardless of income, race, or education, and yet too many New York residents struggle to eat healthfully because of barriers in the food environment. Poor diet is linked to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases, which lead to lower quality of life, higher health care costs, and premature deaths.

Though New York State agencies purchase, serve, and sell food to millions of employees, visitors, students, recipients of state services, and people in state custody, the state currently does *not* have a comprehensive policy ensuring the healthfulness of the food purchased, served, or sold across all state agencies, facilities, and programs. As previously recommended by the New York State Food Policy Council¹ and the New York Academy of Medicine,² establishing nutrition guidelines for state agencies could promote healthier diets for millions of New Yorkers. Improving diet quality to reduce the burden of chronic disease remains as critical as ever and has taken on new urgency as we attempt to build resilience against COVID-19 into the months and years ahead.

Adopting guidelines for food procurement also provides an opportunity to support New York State food producers during a painful economic downturn. To the extent that the guidelines promote healthy, fresh, minimally processed food products grown in New York State, they would further leverage public spending to enhance the economic viability of local farms and the regional food system.

Most importantly, New Yorkers *want* state agencies to serve more healthy and local food. Of 1000 state residents polled by the Center for Science in the Public Interest in September 2020, 71% said the food that state-supported programs and institutions serve should include mostly or only healthy options; 88% said they would favor the state adopting guidelines for state-supported programs and institutions to serve more healthy foods; 65% said they would favor the state adopting guidelines for state-supported programs and institutions to serve fewer unhealthy foods; and 85% said they would favor a goal that state-supported institutions and programs spend 25% of their food dollars on healthy food produced by New York State farms, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and milk.

¹ A Report and Recommendations by the Workgroup on Food Procurement Guidelines to the New York State Council on Food Policy. September 2012. https://www.albany.edu/cphce/prevention_agenda/ns_fp_guidelines.pdf.

² The New York Academy of Medicine. Policy Brief: Healthy Food Procurement Policy for New York State. March 2012. https://nyam.org/media/filer_public/82/0d/820d460d-9c05-48c3-b44b-fad6511bf5da/healthyfoodprocurementpolicy.pdf.

NYSPHA Recommends: NYSPHA strongly supports A5682/S4644, which would direct the Department of Health to develop standards for healthier foods and beverages in all state facilities and state-supported programs. We urge the full legislature to pass this bill as soon as possible, the bill would foster food environments that support, rather than undermine, the health of state residents.

Direct questions to advocacy@nyspha.org

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