



**Testimony to the Joint Fiscal Committees on the
SFY 2018–19 Executive Budget Education**

**Submitted by Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Campaign
February 7, 2018**

Share Our Strength respectfully submits this testimony in support of the Breakfast After the Bell proposal in Governor Cuomo's 2018 budget proposal and urges the legislature to include the proposal in the final New York state budget.

Share Our Strength is a national anti-hunger organization dedicated to ending childhood hunger in the United States. Using proven, practical strategies, our No Kid Hungry campaign builds public-private partnerships with the goal of ensuring children have access to the healthy food they need, every day. In addition to our grant-making in all 50 states, we work with governors, state legislators, and federal policymakers to identify best practices that ensure hungry children have access to a healthy breakfast

Since 2011, our New York No Kid Hungry campaign has helped connect thousands of children across the state with school breakfast and summer meals.

Childhood hunger is a devastating problem. For the first time in the history of our country, research shows that more than half of all American public school students come from low-income families. Here in New York, nearly one million children live in households that struggle with hunger.

School breakfast is an effective way to help hungry kids. Yet, less than half of all children who receive free or reduced price lunch also eat breakfast at school. This means thousands of children across New York State are starting their school day too hungry to learn. In fact, New York ranks 42nd in the nation in school breakfast participation.

Kids miss out on this important meal because breakfast is usually served in the cafeteria before the start of the school day, and bus routes and morning schedules often don't align with this timing, and students often feel stigma or shame about eating in the cafeteria before school.

Teachers see hunger in their classrooms, and understand its effects better than anyone. No Kid Hungry completed a nationwide survey of educators and we found that three out of four public school teachers regularly see students coming to class hungry. Nearly ninety percent of educators said that hunger leads to inability to concentrate in the classroom and eighty four percent cited poor academic performance as a result of hunger.

It doesn't have to be this way. School breakfast is as important to low-income students as textbooks or pencils. When children grow up hungry, our nation is robbed of some of the best minds of our future.

Requiring breakfast to be a part of the school day in schools with a majority of low-income children and providing funding for startup grants for schools to successfully implement the program, as the Breakfast After the Bell proposal would do, ensures kids get the morning nutrition they need. The proposal also gives the flexibility to ensure schools can a range of service models, including Breakfast in the Classroom or Grab and Go. As a national organization, we have seen the success of this policy in states across the country, including Illinois, Nevada, Colorado, Washington state, and New Mexico, all of which have passed similar laws and seen strong increases in the number of children eating school breakfast.

Breakfast After the Bell also has other classroom advantages. Share Our Strength has surveyed teachers on the impact of serving breakfast in their classrooms. Teachers spend that time constructively on classroom activities. Some teachers report they have actually gained instructional time due to fewer disruptions such as visits to the school nurse, tardiness, and absenteeism. A social impact analysis by Deloitte found that students who eat school breakfast attend more days of school annually and score 17.5% higher on math tests, leading to increased graduation rates and higher lifetime earnings.

Finally, New York leaves millions of federal dollars on the table every year due to its low breakfast participation rates. Just last year, the state forfeited more than \$71 million in federal reimbursements due to low participation in school breakfast amongst free and reduced price eligible children.¹

The Breakfast After the Bell proposal has important implications for the future of New York and the future of our country. Ensuring that kids get they healthy food they need is a first step on the path out of poverty. We cannot have a strong America tomorrow without stronger kids today.

We encourage the legislature to support the requirement of Breakfast After the Bell and funding for implementation grants so that more students can start the school day ready to learn.

¹ New York Hunger Solutions. "School Breakfast: Reducing Childhood Hunger, Bolstering Student Success." 2015-2016 School Year.