



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF COUNCIL MEMBER MARK S. WEPRIN

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PARENTS AND ADVOCATES DISCUSS SCHOOL FOOD OPTIONS AT COUNCIL MEMBER MARK WEPRIN'S TOWN HALL MEETING

Residents of Eastern Queens gathered for a Town Hall meeting, hosted by Council Member Mark S. Weprin (D-Oakland Gardens), on the subject of school food. The forum was an opportunity for parents to voice their interests and concerns and for representatives from the Office of School Support Services to provide pertinent information about school food options.

"Recently, some parents have expressed an interest in having more school food options, such as vegetarian food," said Council Member Weprin. "I thank the Office of School Food for engaging in a healthy and constructive dialogue on this issue."

Chief Executive of the Office of School Support Services for the New York City Department of Education Eric Goldstein spoke at the meeting, as did four officials from the Office of School Food and Support.

"We offer a variety of options to accommodate the nutritional needs of students," said Mr. Goldstein. "This year, the federal government has implemented stricter guidelines that the city must comply with," he added.

While some parents were open to local schools' incorporating a vegetarian menu two days a week (just as PS 244Q, the first school with an all-vegetarian menu, began to implement the change), others expressed reluctance or had specific concerns about the implications of vegetarian lunches for students. Some parents advocated for more fruit options, a greater variety of sandwiches, and alternative dairy products for students who are lactose intolerant.

Mr. Goldstein responded to a question about the possibility of a Halal menu for the growing South Asian American community. He said that schools are not properly equipped to prepare religious food. However, Mr. Goldstein suggested that an alternative vegetarian option may accommodate children whose religious belief does not allow them to eat specific meats.