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THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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June 1, 2022

Christopher Tricarico
Senior Executive Director
Office of Food & Nutrition Services (OFNS)
New York City Department of Education
44-36 Vernon Boulevard
Long Island City, NY 11101

Dear Chris,

Thank you for briefing my staff on Thursday, May 26 with the City's plans for the 2022 free Summer Meals Program, a crucial element in the fight against childhood hunger. For years we have worked together to reduce barriers to accessing this federally funded program. I appreciate learning how OFNS is planning to comply with Local Law 4 of 2018 and Local Law 58 of 2021 as well as investing in a robust multilingual marketing campaign, in electronic and print formats.

When I passed Local Law 4 with my former colleague Council Member James Vacca, the goal was to avoid last minute planning by requiring the Department of Education to distribute summer meal information by June 1 of each year. This deadline is critical to effective outreach because scheduling and other details vary from site to site. I appreciate that the DOE publicly posted and proactively circulated a list of summer meals sites last Friday, May 27 - in advance of the June 1 deadline.

It's my understanding though that the DOE, NYCHA and Parks Department are still in the process of finalizing summer meal sites. When does the DOE expect to have a final list of locations? What impediments exist that prevent these sites from being finalized before June 1?

Upon reviewing the site list posted Friday, May 27 on the Department of Education website (sites updated as of May 26), I was very concerned to see that there is only a single open site located in Council District 6. I fully support this location, PS 191: The Riverside School for Makers at 300 West 61 Street, which is hosting a Summer Rising program.

Yet, last year, the following summer meal sites served families on the West Side: Fiorello LaGuardia High School (100 Amsterdam Avenue at 65 Street), Urban Assembly School for Green Careers (145 West 84 Street), The William O'Shea Complex (100 W 77 Street) and PS 75 (735 West End Avenue). The latter two schools will be open as Summer Rising sites this year. PS 191 may serve as an alternate to LaGuardia; these other sites should be expeditiously considered for siting this summer.

Moreover, I'm troubled that there are only two sites for all of Community School District 3 which includes schools from West 61st St. to 123rd St. in Harlem. CSD3 schools serve families living in Morningside Heights and Central Harlem, communities hard hit by COVID-19 according to the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity. What open and closed program sites are being considered and when will they be finalized?

I appreciate that the Department of Education has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with NYCHA to employ public housing residents as summer meal site staff. It's my understanding that you and your staff are meeting with NYCHA regularly and coordinating on siting and publicizing program information to residents.

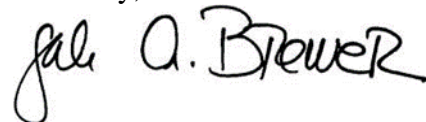
In addition to electronic communication, I would encourage NYCHA to mail all residents address and operation details for nearby summer meal sites. Are there other methods NYCHA can use to inform residents of the program? Posters in elevators or stairwells? Further, what conversations exist to ensure other city agencies such as the Administration for Children Services and the Department of Social Services are promoting the Summer Meals program?

Lastly, with the return to pre-pandemic rules, summer meals will once again be limited to New Yorkers 18 and younger and must be eaten on site. Before the pandemic, I partnered with advocates to raise the issue of food insecure and hungry caregivers accompanying children to the program sites who both openly and discreetly were partaking of summer meals. Several sites were shut down for this practice because of federal reimbursement restrictions. However, our response to the crisis of food insecurity cannot be to reduce youth meal availability.

With food insecurity on the rise, what efforts has the City taken to find other funding sources to feed adults at summer meals sites? I support launching a pilot this summer to address this meal gap. If too late, this should be explored for next summer.

I look forward to partnering with you, your staff and our school food service workers to ensure that every New York City child can access free breakfast and lunch while school is out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gale A. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Gale A. Brewer
City Council, District 6

cc: Chancellor David C. Banks, New York City Department of Education
Mark Treyger, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, New York City Department of Education