



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

mayor@cambridgema.gov

Marc C. McGovern
Mayor

Phone: 617-349-4321
Fax: 617-349-4320

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To the Honorable, Members of the School Committee:

I am writing to share an update on the status of free food service programming for youth across Cambridge enrolled in both CPS as well as DHSP preschools.

Background

As Vice Mayor I lead an initiative that evaluated the cost of living in conjunction with food needs seen across Cambridge. This analysis took a close look at food insecurity, federal income standards and CPS' free/reduced lunch programs. In Cambridge we have a sizable number of people living in poverty within an overall environment of affluence.

Cambridge currently has a poverty rate hovering around 18%, with 30% of our Black and Latino families living below the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG). As we know, the FPG does little to tell the true story of income insecurity in Cambridge, as our cost of living is so much higher than the majority of the country. For example, the FPG for a family of four is \$24,500 per year. In Cambridge, for a family of four to meet their basic needs (housing, utilities and food), or what we defined in the *Income Insecurity Report* (2015) as the "Cambridge Security Standard," they must earn \$108,800 annually. This demonstrates that there is a significant gap between those who are defined as "in poverty" and those who can barely get by in Cambridge.

In March of 2017, I collaborated with School Committee Member Kathleen Kelly, and then Food For Free Program Director Alanna Mallon on the *Free and Reduced Lunch Program Report*, which looked at food insecurity, the impact of hunger on learning, and the current CPS Free/Reduced lunch program.

The report made three recommendations:

- 1) That the Cambridge Public Schools begin using the income guidelines outlined in the City's Income Insecurity Report of 2015 as the guidelines for determining which families qualify for free breakfast and lunch;
- 2) Eliminate the reduced lunch category; and
- 3) That the City of Cambridge add additional funding to the Cambridge Public School 2018 budget to be allocated for providing free breakfast and lunch to all students who qualify under the new income guidelines.

Current Status

As Mayor, I've continued to bring this conversation forward and have met repeatedly with the Superintendent, CPS Administration, DHSP, and the City Manager's Office to address the three recommendations issued in the 2017 report. Given the complexities in both cost and administration of the first recommendation, we made the decision to focus on the recommendations addressing student meals and nutrition.

Thanks to the support of the City Manager and the School Administration, we are moving forward with an effective and sustainable course of action.

In October, the City Manager will be submitting an appropriation recommendation to the City Council for their approval for \$160,000 from Free Cash for an expansion of free food programming for Cambridge youth. Funding will be used to eliminate the Reduced Lunch Category in the Cambridge Public Schools and to establish a free breakfast program in all elementary and upper school buildings, thus providing free breakfast and lunch to hundreds of Cambridge Public School students whose families now earn too much to qualify for Free Lunch but who are still below the Cambridge Security Standard. As noted above, the appropriation recommendation will be made to the City Council in October after the tax rate is set, which is scheduled for October 1, 2018.

This appropriation will not result in a reduction or reallocation of funds from the current Cambridge Public School budget or any subsequent CPS budgets.

In addition, in recognizing that hunger is an impediment to learning and development, these funds will also be used to offer free breakfast to all children who attend the preschool programs through the Department of Human Services Programs.

I would like to thank Vice-Chair Kathleen Kelly, Councillor Alanna Mallon, City Manager Louie DePasquale, City of Cambridge Finance Director David Kale, Superintendent Kenneth Salim, CPS Chief Operating Officer Jim Maloney, CPS Food Service Director Melissa Honeywood, Business Manager for Food Services Anthony Grein, CPS Chief Financial Officer Claire Spinner, and Educational Liaison to the Mayor Elizabeth Liss for all their hard work addressing this very basic need.

Consistent healthy nutrition can and will have an impact on the wellbeing of children and families in our community. I hope that you join me in thanking CPS and City Staff for their positive collaboration in service of Cambridge youth.

Respectfully,



Mayor Marc McGovern