



March 29, 2022

The Honorable James P. McGovern
U.S. House of Representatives
370 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-2102

Dear Chairman McGovern,

On behalf of Wellness in the Schools, I write to offer enthusiastic support of the Committee on Rules' effort to not only end hunger in America but to end hunger in a manner that provides healthy, delicious, sustainable and culturally relevant school meals to all students in this country. I am pleased that you will be hosting a White House conference on hunger to ensure such issues are brought to the forefront.

I am the Executive Chef and Co-Founder of Wellness in the Schools. I am also the Culinary Director at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Finally, through my work at Wellness in the Schools, I am a co-founder of the initiative ScratchWorks. Through these organizations and initiatives, and through my work as a NYC chef for over 30 years, I am dedicated to serving real food to not only my high paying patrons but also to all children in public school. Healthy eating is a right, not a privilege.

Our food system is broken; we prioritize ultra-processed foods which promote layers of health issues, environmental issues, and health care costs. School meals are an integral part of our food system, feeding millions of children. Given its sheer size and import, the national school lunch program (NSLP) has the potential to reverse current trends and play a significant role in transforming a broken system and set our children on a course to healthier lives full of opportunity.

Wellness in the Schools has worked for over 17 years to partner with public school districts to provide healthier, scratch cooked meals to public school children. We work primarily with the NYC Office of Food and Nutrition Services, the largest school district in the country, and also with districts in Florida, California and New Jersey. We work closely with the Food Service team to develop recipes, re-write menus, train school cooks on implementation and even teach children and their families cooking classes to connect to the cafeteria menus. Through our work,

we have partnered with local (and celebrity) chefs to both support and bring awareness to the important work.

In 2019, Wellness in the Schools gathered together the most forward thinking Food Service Directors in NYC to brainstorm ways to better support school districts and school food professionals in their efforts to transition their kitchens to scratch cooking. From their discussion, collaboration, and commitment to change — ScratchWorks was born. The founding group has teamed up as a collective, led by and for school food operators, to help disrupt the current system from *within* the system.

Recently, due to ScratchWorks' advocacy, Congresswoman Johanna Hayes introduced the Scratch Cooked Meals for Students Act (H.R. 6608), together with Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick and Congresswoman Julia Brownley to support schools in their efforts to transitioning their kitchens to cook from scratch. Our goal is for the Scratch Cooked Meals for Students Act to be included in both the House and the Senate through the Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

We are living in a global health crisis, with chronic health disparities playing an important part. Those most at risk of dying are those with underlying health conditions. Those very conditions that Wellness in the Schools and ScratchWorks are both addressing in our efforts to support healthy and delicious school meals. We stand ready to support you.

Thank you for your leadership. We look forward to partnering with you for the health of our nation's youth.

Sincerely,

Chef Bill Telepan
Culinary Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bon Appétit Management Company
Co-Founder, Wellness in the Schools