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LUNCH 4 LEARNING UNION LEADERS, ADVOCATES APPLAUD MAYOR DEBLASIO FOR MAKING PUBLIC SCHOOL LUNCH TRULY “UNIVERSAL” FOR ALL NYC STUDENTS

Mayor expands NYC Council 2018 budget initiative to ensure ALL public school students citywide have access to free school lunch regardless of socioeconomic status

New York, NY – September 6, 2017 - Lunch 4 Learning today praised Mayor de Blasio for supporting Universal Free School Lunch in all New York City public schools. Since 2014, the Lunch 4 Learning campaign has advocated to make free and healthy school meals –Universal Free School Lunch— available to all NYC public school students, regardless of their socio-economic status. In June 2017, the New York City Council extended the existing lunch program to 890 additional public schools in the final City budget. To kick off the new school year, the total number of children with access to free lunch was expected to be approximately 840,000 - 84% of all New York City public school students. Today, in this major policy shift, all New York City schools will provide the program – making lunch truly “Universal” for every child, in every school.

"Lunch 4 Learning Campaign's public school parents, students and advocates are thrilled that ALL New York City public school students will have access to free lunch. Now we will finally put an end to the stigma and other financial barriers that prevent children from receiving the food they need to thrive in our schools." said Liz Accles, Executive Director, Community Food Advocates.

Universal Free School Lunch will finally put an end to the poverty stigma, bullying and “lunch shaming” in all of its forms in New York City public schools, the largest school district in the country.

“Our decision to support the effort to provide free school lunch at every NYC public school was never difficult. Our members who work in schools and school cafeterias knew the negative impact shame and stigma were having on our students. With this policy change, learning just became a lot easier for so many of the kids in our schools. We are extremely proud to have played a role in making this happen.” Henry Garrido, Executive Director, District Council 37.

“Parents, teachers, New York City employees, food activists and New York elected officials came together and made this change happen. Our students and our schools are the winners with universal free lunch.” - Michael Mulgrew, president of the United Federation of Teachers

Lunch 4 Learning has maintained the well-documented position that true equity in New York City public schools means that all students have the same resources--including food without barriers--during lunchtime. Healthy students simply do better on all levels of achievement and performance, cognitive skills and emotional wellbeing. Thanks to the Mayor and City Council, all students will have access to proper nourishment, which will increase NYC students' chances for academic success.

“We want our students to have hungry minds, not hungry bodies,” said Council of School Supervisors and Administrators President Mark Cannizzaro. “We commend Mayor De Blasio for this initiative, which will undoubtedly impact how our students live and learn.”

On the heels of this victory for NYC student and families, the Lunch 4 Learning coalition will focus on ensuring successful implementation of UFSL and looks forward to collaborating with the Department of Education and the de Blasio administration to maximize the program's impact and effectiveness.

Universal Free School Lunch was championed by NYC Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, NYC Council Finance Chair Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, NYC Council Education Committee Chairperson Daniel Dromm, and 45 additional Council Members from throughout the five boroughs, specifically the members of the Black, Latino/a, and Asian Caucus and the Progressive Caucus, as well as Public Advocate Letitia James, and all 5 Borough Presidents.

Lunch 4 Learning leadership includes union leaders Executive Director DC 37 Henry Garrido, UFT President Michael Mulgrew, and CSA President Mark Cannizzaro representing over 300,000 collective members.

ABOUT LUNCH 4 LEARNING

Lunch 4 Learning has brought together students, parents, pediatricians and health advocates, union leaders and their members, organizational leaders and elected officials, and top chefs and celebrities to elevate this issue and focus attention on this anti-hunger, health and educational priority.

In 2016-17, Lunch 4 Learning amplified its advocacy through a direct mail campaign in the 5 boroughs, social media outreach, and on-the-ground rallies on the steps of City Hall, which turned out hundreds of supporters. Moreover, coalition partner and funder, The New York State Health Foundation, released a poll in April 2017 demonstrating 82% of New Yorkers supported Universal Free School Lunch—overwhelming support for expanding the program.

The Lunch 4 Learning campaign also received public support from daytime host, Rachael Ray, who released a Public Service Announcement underlining the need for Universal Free School Lunch in all public schools. High profile supporters including John Legend have also shown their support on social media for the program for Universal Free School Lunch in New York City and other cities across America.

For more information about Lunch 4 Learning, go to: <http://www.lunch4learningnyc.org>