



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

November 19, 2020

Mr. Timothy Capone  
Superintendent  
Montague Township School District  
475 Rt. 206  
Montague, NJ 07827

Dear Superintendent Capone:

A school's core mission is to support the development of its students. This cannot be achieved without supporting their health and well-being. As we continue to grapple with the public health and economic crises, many students and families are also facing growing food insecurity. It is shameful that certain Montague Township School District officials have not made feeding children a priority, especially during these challenging times.

Countless studies show that children who receive nutritious and balanced meals are healthier, more focused in school, and perform better in the classroom. According to the National Institutes of Health, students who are hungry show poorer results in verbal fluency, arithmetic, tests of attention, memory, creativity, physical endurance, and general tests of academic achievement and cognitive functioning. Unfortunately, food insecurity is rising throughout the state and country as unemployment rates increase and small businesses close. With nearly a tenth of youth already living below the poverty line in Montague, it is reasonable to believe that need for a school meals program exists in the School District.

Congress acted months ago to address the increased demand for free and reduced-price meals during the pandemic by passing the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136), which included \$8.8 billion for child nutrition programs and waivers to provide schools more flexibility in distributing meals. This includes the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program, both of which substantially subsidize meals that schools serve to students. Additionally, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has extended its Seamless Summer Option through June 30, 2021. This program allows schools to receive full federal reimbursement for all meals served; in other words, our local community will not have to pay one cent for this program.

As strong proponents of federal programs that reimburse our local schools for getting resources to families in need, we believe that the School District must take advantage of this program and avoid leaving our federal tax dollars on the table. We are relieved that the Montague Township School District is finally utilizing the extension of the Seamless Summer Option, two months after the school year began. Unfortunately, on the first day of the program, the School District ran out of meals before serving every family. The District has shown that it is unprepared to meet the obvious demand of Montague children and families who need help. According to recent reports, the School District has not only grossly miscalculated interest in the program, but has also made access to these meals difficult for some residents. This is simply unacceptable.

For the sake of our children and families, the School District must improve the effectiveness of this program. Please provide a detailed response of changes you intend to or have implemented to ensure access to these meals for all of the children and families who need them in Montague. Also, please advise us on your long-term school lunch and breakfast plans for Montague children. In the meantime, Congressman Gottheimer's office will be available to connect families with the resources they need. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Josh Gottheimer  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Steven V. Oroho  
STATE SENATOR



F. Parker Space  
ASSEMBLYMAN



Harold J. Wirths  
ASSEMBLYMAN