



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

## **Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams**

Panel on Educational Policy Monthly Meeting  
New York City Council Committee on Education  
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Good afternoon Chair Treyger and Committee Members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on a package of measures to enhance food equity across the city. Food policy issues have been and remain a pillar of my advocacy efforts. In 2017, Council Member Rafael L. Espinal Jr. and I introduced legislation that would create a comprehensive urban agriculture plan for New York City. Unfortunately, Intro 1661 was amended to simply create an online resource for urban agriculture growers and community gardeners, and in 2018 we reintroduced this bill as Intro 1058 to finally create this plan. A hearing was held on this bill earlier this year in the New York City Council Committee on Land Use, and I urge the council to advance this bill, as it would improve the way New Yorkers approach nutrition and food production. We have continued to make significant strides on these issues in recent months including the passage of Resolution 238, which called on the Department of Education to ban the offering of processed meat in school meals, and the June march from Brooklyn to City Hall to raise awareness around healthier food in schools. Furthermore, Meatless Monday is now in effect across all public schools, in many City agencies, and in NYC Health + Hospitals.

However, there is much more we can and must do on these issues. Whether they are my constituents in Brownsville or your constituents in the Bronx, people across the city face food insecurity at alarming rates. Far too many of Brooklyn's 2.6 million residents struggle not only to get enough fresh, healthy food for themselves and their families, but they also suffer from chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, obesity, and Type II diabetes.

These issues touch adults and children alike. With approximately one out of every three public school-aged child residing in the borough of Brooklyn, I am here today to stand alongside the NYC Healthy School Food Alliance in support of Intro 1676. Public school students deserve equal and ample access to nutritious food, especially plant-based food options such as fruits, legumes, nuts, seeds, vegetables, and whole-grains. Studies show that a healthy diet affects the mental, social, and behavioral development of school-aged children, which is why it is imperative to make sure healthy food initiatives such as scratch-based cooking come to fruition. We need to strive to provide our students with the tools necessary to thrive, both academically and beyond, and that begins on their plate.

Research indicates that a whole-food, plant-based diet is the healthiest eating pattern for preventing chronic illness. Therefore, I believe it is our duty as policymakers to make plant-based foods accessible to everyone, especially to our growing children. Based on available evidence in nutrition science and what I believe are shared goals within the Council, it is clear that this body should adopt Intro 1676 in order to improve the wellness of our communities by expanding access to healthy, fresh foods.

As Brooklyn borough president, I am dedicated to improving the public health of our constituents, which includes developing food policies to provide all New York City public school students with access to nutritious food, which will promote the well-being of our communities today and long into the future.

May it also be noted to this Committee that, in addition to Intro 1676, I stand in support of a number of other measures under discussion but about which I will not speak at length today. They include:

- Intro 1650 increasing information about the Health Bucks Program and farmer's markets
- Intro 1654 enhancing constituent awareness about farm-to-city projects through neighborhood awareness campaigns
- Intro 1659 enabling eligible senior citizens to enroll in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Intro 1660 creating a good food purchasing program and associated advisory board; I encourage the Committee to strengthen this measure by consulting relevant experts in the plant-based nutrition and lifestyle medicine community
- Intro 1663 establishing an Office of Urban Agriculture and associated advisory board; as this Committee is familiar, I stand in strong support of advancements in urban agriculture across the city and further citywide coordination on the matter
- Intro 1664 requiring the New York City Office of Food Policy to create a 10-year food policy plan; I strongly encourage the prioritization of the incorporation of the tenants found in a whole-food plant-based diet/lifestyle, which not only maximizes the incorporation of fruits, vegetables, whole-grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds, but limits the consumption of animal-based foods
- Intro 1666 codifying an Office of Food Policy
- Intro 1673 requiring all city agencies with food procurement contracts to limit food waste
- Intro 1675 requiring the New York City Department of Education (DOE) to track and disseminate information about summer meals
- Intro 1680 mandating reporting regarding the production, processing, distribution, and consumption of food in the city required by Local Law 52 of 2011
- Intro 1681 encouraging schools to create a food waste prevention plans
- Res 1024 calling upon the New York State Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA) to expand eligibility for SNAP to public college students
- Resolution 1025 opts into the SNAP Restaurant Meals Program to allow SNAP recipients who are disabled, elderly, and homeless to use their benefits on hot meals and other prepared foods at participating delis, grocery stores, and restaurants

Thank you to the Committee and the Chair for the opportunity to testify.