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| **For Immediate Release:** 3/22/2019 | **GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO** |

**GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES STATEWIDE EFFORTS TO DELIVER MILLIONS OF MEALS TO OLDER NEW YORKERS**

***Members of the Governor's Administration Participate in 'March for Meals' Campaign to Highlight New York's Nation-Leading Nutrition Program***

***Largest Healthy Eating Program for Older Adults in the Country Supports New York's Efforts as First Age-Friendly State***

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced statewide efforts to deliver high-quality, nutritious meals to older New Yorkers as part of the annual national March for Meals campaign. New York [leads](https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/March_for_Meals_factsheet_2019_FINAL.pdf) the nation in providing the highest quality meals to older adults, and on March 22, the date when the national nutrition program for older adults was established in 1972, members of the Governor's administration participated in events to continue the state's efforts to support healthy aging.

"The health of our residents is our top priority, and New York's nutrition program has set a national standard for the rest of the country to follow," **Governor Cuomo said.**"This critical program delivers nearly 22 million meals to older New Yorkers across the state every year, helping to create a stronger, healthier Empire State."

"As someone who not long ago was a primary caregiver for an older aunt who benefitted from the delivery of healthy meals, I know how important it is that New York State continues to lead in health and wellness opportunities for residents," **said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul**. "The annual March for Meals initiative spotlights the importance of the work we continue to undertake across the state to support critical nutrition services for our older New Yorkers."

Governor Cuomo's commitment to the nutritional needs of older adults is unmatched with [21.5 million meals served](https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/County_meal_statistics_2018_FINAL.pdf) annually to 214,000 older adults across New York. In all, the state spends at least $53 million more on home-delivered and community meals than any other state. New York is the first state in the nation to receive an official [age-friendly designation](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-new-york-designated-first-age-friendly-state-nation-aarp-and-world) by AARP and the World Health Organization, and also ranks first in the nation for the number of people receiving nutrition services and supports.

Every March, Meals on Wheels programs across the country raise awareness in their communities about the critical nutritional needs of older adults and the importance of healthy meals, as well as provide nutrition counseling and education. During March's National Nutrition Month, programs highlight the importance of improving health, the critical role volunteers play in preparing and delivering meals and the partnership between state agencies and community organizations to deliver meals—all of which are key components of the Governor's efforts to make New York the healthiest state in the nation.

On March 22, 1972, President Richard Nixon signed into law a measure that amended the Older Americans Act of 1965 and established a national nutrition program for adults 60 years and older. To commemorate this legislation, members of Governor Cuomo's administration took part in the campaign on March 22:

* New York State Office for the Aging Acting Director Greg Olsen will participate on a home-delivered meal route as well as serve lunch and meet with meal recipients in Madison County.
* New York State Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker will serve lunch and meet with meal recipients at the Hamilton-Madison House City Hall Senior Center in New York City.
* New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets Commissioner Richard Ball will serve lunch and meet with meal recipients at the Westview Homes Senior Center in Albany County.
* New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Acting Commissioner Michael Hein will serve lunch and meet with meal recipients at the Rensselaer Senior Center in Rensselaer County.
* New York State Division of Veterans Affairs Deputy Director for Program Development Benjamin Pomerance will participate on a home-delivered meal route in Franklin County.

**New York State Office for the Aging Acting Director Greg Olsen said**, "Our state's nutrition program is the largest in the country and a major component in maintaining health, autonomy, and independence for its hundreds of thousands of participants annually. The program relies on volunteers to prepare meals and deliver them on over 2,400 meal routes and at more than 700 congregate sites throughout the state. Absent these nutritious meals and the wrap-around services that accompany them, many more older adults would not be able to remain at home."

**New York State Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker said**, "The nutritional needs of older adults become more critical with advancing age. Having access to healthy foods and nutritional support is an important part of the recipe that makes New York an age-friendly state."

**New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner Richard Ball said**, "I am proud of the work we are doing as a State to improve nutrition and fight hunger in communities across New York. The Governor has made access to healthy, local foods a priority for New York, and the Department and our fellow agencies have responded. Through programs like FreshConnect, the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, and the work of the Governor's New York State Council on Hunger and Food Policy, we are helping more New Yorkers, including our seniors, have better access to nutritious and wholesome foods."

**New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Acting Commissioner Michael Hein said**, "For so many older adults, food insecurity poses a significant obstacle that can imperil their ability to lead safe, independent lives as they age. The March for Meals campaign leverages public awareness with critical resources like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to provide thousands of older adults across New York with access to healthy, nutritious food. I applaud Governor Cuomo for supporting healthy aging and making the welfare of our state's older adult population a priority of his administration."

**New York State Division of Veterans Affairs Executive Deputy Director Joel Evans said**, "New York's nutrition program addresses the important concern of food insecurity for older adults. To be able to provide healthy and nutritious meals for those who may not otherwise have access demonstrates a dedication to New York's older adults to ensure they are provided for and taken care of. It is an honor to be able to work with our partner agencies to ensure older New Yorkers have access to healthy and fresh food."

**Senator Rachel May, Chair of the New York State Senate Aging Committee said,** "Seniors across New York State face many challenges. As Chair of the Senate's Aging Committee, I will continue to advocate for our state's nutrition services to ensure they are getting the full support they need to provide vital resources for our senior community. With one out of every four seniors nutritionally insecure—meaning they do not have the financial resources to buy food when they need it—access to nutritious meals provides seniors with the dignity and assistance they deserve. Often, hunger and loneliness go hand-in-hand and a knock on the door from a home delivered meal volunteer can truly brighten someone's day."

**Assemblymember Harry Bronson, Chair of the New York State Assembly Aging Committee said,**"I proudly join the Governor in recognizing and celebrating the importance of our nutrition program and its positive impact on the lives of our seniors. When the thousands of volunteers deliver healthy, nutritious meals to so many across our communities and state, they are really delivering kindness, appreciation, and hope. I thank the outstanding volunteers and Governor Cuomo for supporting New York's efforts as the first age-friendly state in the nation."

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<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-statewide-efforts-deliver-millions-meals-older-new-yorkers-0>