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**CITY HALL City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn and Council Members Helen Diane Foster, Lewis Fidler, Robert Jackson and Annabel Palma today held a hearing calling for key improvements to the Child Nutrition Act, which is currently pending reauthorization by Congress. The Child Nutrition Act is the federal legislation that determines school food policy and resources, including the Federal School Lunches and School Breakfast programs.**

#### Council Holds Hearing for Improvements to Child Nutrition Act

(Media-Newswire.com) - CITY HALL – City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn and Council Members Helen Diane Foster, Lewis Fidler, Robert Jackson and Annabel Palma today held a hearing calling for key improvements to the Child Nutrition Act, which is currently pending reauthorization by Congress. The Child Nutrition Act is the federal legislation that determines school food policy and resources, including the Federal School Lunches and School Breakfast programs.

New York City and State have much at stake based on the outcome of the reauthorization. Childhood obesity has doubled in New York over the past 25 years and now accounts for \$242 million in statewide medical costs. In addition, one in five children in New York City relies on emergency food programs for meals.

“New York City families have been hit hard by the recession, and now more than ever we need to make sure our children have access to healthy meals,” said Speaker Christine C. Quinn. “The City Council has been working to fight two of the biggest challenges facing our city – hunger and obesity. And with a few key improvements to the Child Nutrition Act, we’ll be able to provide free meals to tens of thousands of additional students, and improve the nutrition level of food we serve in our schools.”

There are many existing improvements to the Child Nutrition Act that have the support of the Council, including direct certification of eligibility, extending the Women, Infants and Children ( WIC ) Program re-certification period from 6 months to 1 year, and a \$50 million farm-to-school grant program.

However, the Council still has a number of significant concerns with the current bill, and is calling for the following changes that would significantly benefit children in New York City and around the country:

- Increasing the funding level from \$450 million to \$1 billion per year to match President Obama’s proposal
- Ensuring the valuable Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education ( SNAP Ed ) Program is not sacrificed for other nutrition programs
- Extending a proposed pilot program to directly certify Medicaid recipients for free

lunches to a full, nationwide program

“Every child deserves to have access to nutritious meals, but for too many go to bed hungry each night,” said Council Member Helen Diane Foster, Chair of the Committee on State and Federal Legislation. “The Child Nutrition Act is one of the most powerful tools we have in our efforts to fight this epidemic of hunger. These key improvements will help us provide even better meals to even more of our children.”

“Healthy bodies make healthy minds and healthy children make for a healthy future,” said Council Member Lewis A. Fidler, Chair of the Youth Services Committee. “Ensuring proper nutrition for our nation's children is not just a goal, it is a necessity.”

“Hungry children can't concentrate, and if they can't concentrate they can't learn,” said Council Member Robert Jackson, Chair of the Education Committee. “It is essential that we eliminate hunger and nutritional deficiencies in this country, one of the world's most advanced and wealthiest nations.”

“Child nutrition programs are a crucial safety net for low-income children and help families stretch limited resources,” said Council Member Annabel Palma, Chair of the General Welfare Committee. “The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act is an opportunity to expand and strengthen these vital and successful programs which provide children with the year-round nutrition they need to grow up strong and healthy.”

“Congress has a significant opportunity this year to pass a Child Nutrition Reauthorization that dramatically expands access to healthy meals for school children and advances us towards the goal of ending child hunger by 2015 – but they won't get there without strong advocacy,” said Lucy Cabrera, Ph.D., President & CEO of the Food Bank For New York City. “I thank Speaker Quinn and the City Council for sending Congress a clear message that this is what New York City needs, and that Child Nutrition improvements must not come at the cost of other valuable nutrition programs.”

“School meals are the primary source of food for many New York City kids, especially the children served by City Harvest and other anti-hunger organizations,” said Jilly Stephens, Executive Director of City Harvest. “We support the New York City Council's priorities for the Child Nutrition Act and ask that Congress provide at least \$1 billion per year in additional funding to match President Obama's proposal.”

“We are fighting hard to ensure that Congress uses the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Bill to provide serious resources to help meet President Obama's goal of end U.S. child hunger by 2015. We are thrilled that Speaker Quinn and the Council are providing such strong leadership in that effort,” said Joel Berg, Executive Director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger.

In addition to the resolution, Speaker Quinn and the Council Members have sent letters to key members of Congress, urging them to take up these amendments. The Council is

also reaching out to other cities across New York State and the country, to for a united front in seeking improvements to the bill.