



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

424 West West 33 Street, Suite #580
New York, NY 10001
tel: 212-736-4536
www.nyc.gov/mcb4

JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

April 18, 2022

Hon. Eric Adams
Mayor
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Sheena Wright
Deputy Mayor
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

David C. Banks
Chancellor
Chancellor
Department of Education
52 Chambers St., New York NY, 10007

Dan Weisberg
First Deputy Chancellor
Department of Education
52 Chambers St., New York NY, 10007

Re: Plant Power Friday

Dear Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks,

Manhattan Community Board 4 enthusiastically supports the Mayor's efforts to ensure nutritious, plant-based meals are more frequently on the menu for lunches served by the Department of Education through the Plant Power Friday program. We are encouraged that the Mayor is instituting an initiative to serve healthier foods to our public school students as research indicates plant-based diets lower the risk of certain diseases and improve overall health.¹ This initiative will have a positive impact on short and long term health of the approximately 1 million students who have access to lunch at NYC DOE schools, and have the benefit of responding to requests for more options that can be religiously and culturally appropriate for our diverse student body. We are also supportive of expanding this initiative to all of the approximately 850,000 meals served daily by the DOE and by 11 other city agencies, which the administration signaled its intent to do in summer 2023.

At the April 6, 2022 MCB4 Full Board meeting the following comments were approved by a vote of 38 in favor, 4 against, 0 abstaining and 0 present but not eligible to vote.

¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41398-019-0552-0>

We also would like to note the positive environmental impact of a plant-based diet. “Shifting away from animal-based foods could not only add up to 49% to the global food supply without expanding croplands’ but would also significantly reduce carbon emissions and waste byproducts that end up in our oceans and as seafood byproducts.”²

We understand the Plant Power Friday program will be continuing throughout this semester and into the 2022-2023 school year. At our March 14 Arts, Culture, Education & Street Life Committee (ACES) meeting we discussed with the DOE and the New York State Health Foundation steps we believe are necessary in order for this ambitious plan to be successful moving forward.

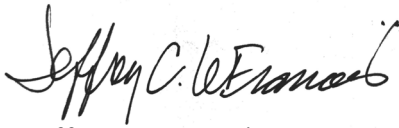
MCB4 would like to offer the following suggestions:

- We urge the DOE to rapidly fill open roles. Current understaffing in school lunchrooms is putting a tremendous strain on lunch service employees, especially now when schools are expected to modify their menus. The city cannot continue to expect short-staffed units carry the responsibility of serving a complete student body.
- We encourage the DOE to ensure cafeteria staff are thoroughly trained on providing plant-based options to ensure these meals are suitable and appetizing. The staff is not trained nor properly supported in preparing and serving plant-based meals. The lack of guidance is resulting in inconsistent and sometimes incomplete plant-based meals.
- We recommend proactively planning ahead in the future, both to procure the ingredients required for plant-based menus and to provide school staff with the resources they need to prepare meals successfully.
- Prioritize locally sourced ingredients.
- We suggest that the DOE reinstate the school-level pilot programs that were stopped due to COVID, specifically:
 - Meatless Mondays
 - New York Thursdays
 - Vegetarian Schools
 - Kosher and Halal pilots
 - Farm to School (formerly Garden to Café)
 - Alternative Menu
 - Salad Bars
 - Brigaid Scratch Cooking Pilot

² <https://www.sustain.ucla.edu/food-systems/the-case-for-plant-based/>

We look forward to the evolution of this project and hope the proper time and attention will be given to make it successful.

Sincerely,



Jeffery LeFranois
Chair
Community Board 4



Allen Oster
Co-Chair
ACES Committee



Kit Tollerson
Co-Chair
ACES Committee

cc: Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Council
Hon. Mark Levin, Manhattan Borough President
Fred Kreizman, Commissioner, Mayor's Community Affairs Unit
Shaun D. Francois, President Local 372 DC 37