



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND MENTAL HYGIENE**
Dave A. Chokshi, MD MSc
Commissioner

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, March 12, 2021**

Good Health, Good Value: NYC Receives \$5.5 Million Grant to Make Healthy Food More Affordable to New Yorkers

The USDA grant will help make fresh fruits and vegetables accessible for more customers who use SNAP at participating local supermarkets

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to deeply impact communities across NYC, this funding will help address food insecurity.

March 12, 2021 — The City has received \$5.5 million federal grant through the Fund for Public Health NYC to help increase access to nutritious foods and fight health inequities in New York City, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene announced today.

“The pandemic has taken a financial toll on so many of our friends and neighbors,” said **Health Department Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi**. “But no one should go hungry in New York City or be forced to choose between what’s healthy and what’s affordable. This investment will put nutritious food on New Yorkers’ tables and contribute to a more healthy, equitable city.”

The grant, from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), will support fruit and vegetable purchases from farmers markets and independent grocers by New Yorkers who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Health Department and its partners will contribute matching funds representing an \$11 million commitment to expanding equitable access to affordable fruits and vegetables.

The funding will support expansion of the Health Department’s longstanding farmers market SNAP incentive program, [Health Bucks](#). Farmers market customers now get \$2 in Health Bucks for every \$2 spent in SNAP benefits, a doubling of purchasing power, up to \$10 in Health Bucks per day. Previously, customers received \$2 in Health Bucks for every \$5 spent in SNAP at farmers markets.

Under the grant, New York City’s innovative grocery store-based fruit and vegetable incentive program, [Get the Good Stuff](#), will be expanded to additional stores. The program offers a dollar-for-dollar match on purchases of eligible fruits, vegetables and beans by New Yorkers with SNAP benefits at participating stores. For every \$1 spent in SNAP benefits on eligible fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits, vegetables, and beans, program participants get \$1 added to a program loyalty card, to purchase more eligible foods. Since the program began in June 2019, customers participating in the program have redeemed over \$1.25 million worth of fruit and vegetable incentives at six grocery stores.

The Health Department will also partner with local community-based organizations and urban farmers to offer a 50% discount on prepackaged bags of locally grown produce purchased with SNAP benefits. New Yorkers with SNAP will be able access a selection of 6-10 seasonal fruits and vegetables, often for less than \$10.

“FPHNYC is thrilled to work closely with the Health Department on this inspiring program,” said **Sara Gardner, Executive Director of the Fund for Public Health NYC**. “COVID has made it even more apparent how many New Yorkers struggle to access healthy food; it’s essential that we address these disparities to ensure all New York families can thrive. As a longstanding partner on many components of this work, we are so proud of this momentous achievement that will continue to make New York City healthier and more equitable for all.”

“GrowNYC congratulates the NYC Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, recipients of USDA funding that will allow their critical Health Bucks program to continue,” said **Marcel Van Ooyen, President and CEO of GrowNYC**. “During the Covid-19 health crisis, we’ve seen a 44% increase in SNAP usage at our Greenmarkets and other food access sites. Right now, a growing number of New Yorkers need support in feeding their families, and the vital Health Bucks program provides such support and, also, ensures they can purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.”

“We are thrilled to partner with the NYC Health Department on Get the Good Stuff and are so happy that the program will continue thanks to the new USDA funding,” said **Philip Penta, Managing Partner of Penzim Produce Group d/b/a Three Guys From Brooklyn**. “The program helps neighborhood grocery stores like mine expand their customer base and sell more produce, while also helping New Yorkers with SNAP put more healthy food on the table.”

“Our farm stand customers paying with SNAP are thrilled with the new \$2 for \$2 match as it is helping them purchase the healthy food they want to eat,” said **Whitney Reuling, Director of Food and Nutrition Programs at Children’s Aid**. “We are excited to be able to offer a similar discount at our food box sites as we know many families are struggling to afford food right now. This program will help make healthier eating that much easier.”

“Farmers have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and supporting purchases of local produce is more important than ever,” said **Diane Eggert, Executive Director of the Farmers Market Federation of New York**. “The increased Health Bucks SNAP incentive and discount on prepaid bags of locally-grown produce will not only increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables for New Yorkers with SNAP, but will help provide needed revenue to local farmers.”

“We know from our experience that, if healthier food is made more available and convenient for low-income Americans, they will be thrilled to be able to obtain and eat it,” said **Joel Berg, CEO of Hunger Free America**, a nationwide direct service and advocacy organization based in New York City. “This vital program expansion will help them do just that. This will decrease both hunger and diseases caused by malnutrition and thus is the ultimate win-win.”

“Beata Technology, Inc. has been pleased to partner with the NYC Health Department and our grocery store customers on Get the Good Stuff since spring 2019. Together, we laid the

groundwork for electronic SNAP incentives at grocery stores in NYC, which has helped put more money into the hands of New Yorkers with SNAP to spend on fruits and vegetables,” said **Geovanny Concepcion, Projects Development Director of Beata Technology**. “We are thrilled that the NYC Health Department was awarded a USDA Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program grant to continue and expand this successful program.”

“The increased Health Bucks SNAP incentive will be a boost for our farmers market customers,” said **Luciano Contreras at Riseboro Community Partnership**. “Health Bucks help New Yorkers with SNAP get more for their money when shopping at farmers and help support our community and the local economy. Our farmers market has participated in the Health Bucks program over the years and we have seen firsthand the impact it has on our shoppers.”

The Health Department and its partners will use this new funding to help address inequities in food security and healthy food access in NYC, which are undergirded by current and historical structural racism and social injustices. More than 1.6 million New Yorkers participate in SNAP. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 1.4 million New Yorkers relied on food pantries and soup kitchens and 1.2 million were food-insecure. In 2019, NYC adults residing in households with the highest income levels consumed significantly more fruits and vegetables (3 servings) than those residing in households with lower income levels.

In 2005 the Health Department launched Health Bucks, one of the nation’s first fruit and vegetable incentive programs. New Yorkers have used Health Bucks to purchase more than \$6 million worth of fresh fruits and vegetables. The program is available at over 100 NYC farmers markets. Building on the success of Health Bucks, the Health Department launched Get the Good Stuff in June 2019 with support from a Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive grant from the USDA and in partnership with the Fund for Public Health New York City. Since the program’s inception, over 7,000 New Yorkers with SNAP have enrolled in the program and have redeemed more than \$1.1 million worth of fruit and vegetable incentives.

For more information about the Health Bucks and Get the Good Stuff programs, visit nyc.gov/health. To find a farmers market near you, text SoGood to 877-877.

###

#010-21

MEDIA CONTACT: Patrick Gallahue / Victoria Merlino
PressOffice@health.nyc.gov