

It is my pleasure to express my strong support for RWJBarnabas Health (RWJBH) and the renewal of State-appropriated funds to RWJBH in the FY 2027 New Jersey State Budget on behalf of Brigaid. Brigaid is a national organization that partners with school district foodservice programs to strengthen culinary operations, build staff capacity, and expand access to high-quality, scratch-cooked meals for students. The support made possible through these State-appropriated funds enables RWJBH to invest directly in our work and advance health and wellness through improved school meal programs.

Brigaid's mission aligns directly with RWJBH's commitment to building and sustaining healthier communities. Together, our partnership supports Newark Public Schools (NPS)—a district that serves more than 41,000 students, over 80% of whom qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Newark's school cafeterias are a critical public health anchor, serving upwards of 54,000 meals daily. RWJBH's investment has enabled collaborative work that improves nutritional quality, food safety, student engagement, and overall program performance.

With RWJBH's support, Brigaid provides hands-on culinary training, operational coaching, and menu development across all 71 NPS kitchen sites, working alongside more than 300 foodservice employees. Since the start of the school year, our chefs have delivered over 250 on-site training sessions focused on foundational food safety, sanitation, and menu execution—critical improvements that directly affect the meals students receive. RWJBH has also helped advance student-centered initiatives, including the expansion of Student-Led Nutrition Advisory Council (SNAC) meetings across multiple schools, ensuring that students' voices shape menus and meal quality.

RWJBH's role as a trusted community institution—and its ability to mobilize resources, expertise, and cross-sector collaboration—has significantly supported our ability to do this work. Continued State appropriations to RWJBH are critical to sustaining this work. We express our sincere appreciation for our partnership with RWJBH and their ongoing commitment to building and sustaining healthier communities, and believe continued State investment in RWJBH's community partnerships is essential to maintaining programs that directly benefit children and families across New Jersey.

Sincerely,

**Dan Giusti**

CEO and Founder, Brigaid