Dear (School official’s name)

A good breakfast helps students focus in class, score higher on standardized tests and avoid trips to the school nurse. When children are hungry, they cannot concentrate on a reading assignment or solve a math problem.

New Jersey has made great progress in providing breakfast to more students, rising to 19th nationally for its participation rate in this federally-funded child nutrition program. Despite this progress, a recent report by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) shows that your district has low participation in the federal School Breakfast Program. (Advocates can find data for your district at www.njschoolbreakfast.org)

In your school district, just XX percent of eligible children received school breakfast. That means XX children are going without this nutritious start to the school day. If participation in the breakfast program in (SCHOOL DISTRICT NAME) was at 100 percent of all eligible children, your district would receive an additional $XX in federal dollars.

The best way to boost breakfast participation is to serve breakfast during the first few minutes of the school day, rather than before school. Known as breakfast after the bell, this approach feeds more students while also bringing additional federally dollars into your district. Various models exist and can be adapted to fit your district’s facilities and needs.

Districts that adopt these approaches report sharp increases in breakfast participation and positive results in many areas, including student achievement and behavior. They also say initial concerns about cost, clean-up and lost instructional time turn out to be easily overcome.

In addition, the New Jersey Departments of Education and Agriculture have issued a joint memorandum, encouraging districts to adopt breakfast after the bell. The education department stated that breakfast can count toward instructional time.

Resources are available to help your district implement a more effective breakfast program, including technical and financial assistance. Please visit www.njschoolbreakfast.org for a list of resources.

New Jersey makes a substantial investment in public education. School breakfast expansion can be accomplished with little or no additional state or local dollars in districts with high concentration of poor children. This will help more children succeed in school and graduate from high school career- or college-ready.

I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you about this issue. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,