

ASSEMBLY AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY  
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 2365

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: FEBRUARY 14, 2022

The Assembly Agriculture and Food Security Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 2365.

Current law requires the Department of Agriculture (DOA), in consultation with the Department of Education (DOE), to develop pamphlets and other promotional materials for the State's school meals programs and provide such promotional materials to every school district in the State, for distribution to the parents and guardians of students who are enrolled at schools in the district. This bill would expand this existing promotional requirement by requiring the DOA, in consultation with the DOE, to additionally develop and implement a formalized, Statewide public education campaign that is designed to educate parents and guardians, throughout the State, about the various school meals program options that are available to students in New Jersey.

The bill would additionally clarify that both the DOA's public education campaign and its promotional materials are to:

(1) highlight and promote the nature, purposes, value, and importance of the National School Lunch Program, the federal School Breakfast Program, the federal Summer Food Service Program and other similar summer meals programs, as well as the State's breakfast after the bell programs, the State's emergency meals distribution program (established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic), and any new school meals programs that are implemented in the State after the bill's effective date;

(2) emphasize the importance of providing a nutritious meal to all children for their general health and success in school;

(3) emphasize the ability of eligible students to obtain free or reduced price meals under the State's school meals programs, and inform parents and guardians about the various ways in which a student may be determined to be categorically eligible for free meals under these programs, and the federal and State-level income-based criteria that must be satisfied in order for a student to obtain free or reduced price school meals, under these programs, on the basis of annual household income;

(4) highlight and describe the application and determination processes that are used, by schools and school districts, to certify students for free or reduced price school meals;

(5) highlight and describe the rights that are applicable to students and families in association with a student's subsidized or unsubsidized receipt of school meals in the State; and

(6) inform parents and guardians about the nature and extent of any proposed or implemented expansion of the existing school meals programs in the State, including, but not limited to, the nature and extent of any proposed or implemented expansion of the categories of students who are eligible for free or reduced price school meals under such programs.