SENATE, No. 687

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:
Senator M. TERESA RUIZ
District 29 (Essex)
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SYNOPSIS

"Hunger-Free Students' Bill of Rights Act"; requires certain school meal information be provided to students' parents; establishes protocols for identifying eligible students for meal programs; prohibits stigmatizing student with bill in arrears.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported with technical review.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 2/25/2020)

AN ACT concerning school meals and amending and supplementing P.L.2015, c.15.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. (New section) Section 1 of P.L.2015, c.15 (C.18A:33-21) and sections 3 and 4 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) shall be known and may be cited as the "Hunger-Free Students' Bill of Rights Act."

2. Section 1 of P.L.2015, c.15 (C.18A:33-21) is amended to read as follows:

1. a. In the event that a school district determines that a student's school breakfast or school lunch bill is in arrears, the district shall contact the student's parent or guardian to provide notice of the arrearage and shall provide the parent or guardian with a period of 10 school days to pay the amount due. If the student's parent or guardian has not made full payment by the end of the 10 school days, then the district shall again contact the student's parent or guardian to provide notice that school breakfast or school lunch, as applicable, shall not be served to the student beginning one week from the date of the second notice unless payment is made in full.

A school district shall report at least biannually to the Department of Agriculture the number of students who are denied school breakfast or school lunch pursuant to this section.

b. A school district shall not:

(1) publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot pay for a school breakfast or a school lunch or whose school breakfast or school lunch bill is in arrears, for example, by requiring that the student sit at a separate table or wear a wristband, hand stamp, or identifying mark or by serving the student an alternative meal;

(2) require a student who cannot pay for a school breakfast or a school lunch or whose school breakfast or school lunch bill is in arrears to do chores or other work to pay for the school breakfast or school lunch; or

(3) require a student to discard a school breakfast or school lunch after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for a school breakfast or a school lunch or because money is owed for previously provided meals.

c. If a student owes money for the equivalent of five or more school meals, a school district shall:

(1) determine if the student is eligible for a free or reduced price school meal;

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

(2) make at least two attempts, not including the application or instructions provided to the parent or guardian pursuant to section 3 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill), to contact the student's parent or guardian and have the parent or guardian fill out an application for the school lunch program and school breakfast program; and

(3) require a principal, or a person designated by the principal, to contact the parent or guardian to offer assistance with the application for the school lunch and school breakfast program, determine if there are other issues within the household that have caused the child to have insufficient funds to purchase a school breakfast or school lunch, and offer any other appropriate assistance.

d. A school district shall direct communications about a student's school breakfast or school lunch bill being in arrears to the parent or guardian and not the student. Nothing in this subsection shall prohibit a school district from sending a student home with a letter addressed to a parent or guardian.

(cf: P.L.2018, c.27)

3. (New section) At the beginning of each school year, and upon initial enrollment in the case of a student enrolling during the school year, a school district shall provide to the parent or guardian of each student:

a. information on the National School Lunch Program and the federal School Breakfast Program;

b. an application to apply for the school lunch and school breakfast programs and instructions for completing the application; and

c. information on the rights of students and their families under P.L.2015, c.15 (C.18A:33-21) and P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

The district may provide the application and information electronically, through the usual means by which the school district communicates with parents electronically. The application and information shall be in a language that the parent or guardian understands.

4. (New section) The school district liaison for the education of homeless children shall coordinate with school district personnel to ensure that a homeless student receives free school meals and is monitored according to the school district's policies.

5. This act shall take effect on the first day of the first full school year following the date of enactment.