SENATE, No. 1031

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JANUARY 30, 2020

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

SYNOPSIS

Requires certain school meal information be provided to public school students' parents and requires school districts to request that families apply for school meals under certain circumstances.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ACT concerning school meals and supplementing P.L.2015, c.15 (C.18A:33-21).

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

1. a. 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:

(1) a hardcopy of information on the National School Lunch Program and the federal School Breakfast Program; and

(2) a hardcopy application to apply for the school lunch and school breakfast programs and instructions for completing the application.

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

Information provided to the parent or guardian shall include a notice that an application to apply for the school lunch and school breakfast programs may be submitted at any time during the school year and is required to be submitted annually.

b. The school district shall require the parent or guardian to either submit an application to apply for the school lunch and school breakfast programs or submit a signed card provided by the school district indicating that the parent or guardian has received the application and information and is not interested in participating in the school lunch and school breakfast programs. The card shall include a notice stating that a parent or guardian may submit an application to apply for the school lunch and school breakfast programs at any time during the school year.

If a school district does not receive an application or a signed card, the school district shall make at least one attempt to contact the student’s parent or guardian and request that the parent or guardian submit either an application or signed card.

c. A school district shall provide assistance to a parent or guardian in filling out an application to apply for the school lunch and school breakfast programs, upon the request of the parent or guardian.

d. If a student owes money for the equivalent of five or more school meals, a school district shall make at least two attempts to contact the student's parent or guardian and request that the parent or guardian fill out an application for the school lunch and school breakfast programs.

e. The provisions of this section shall not apply in the case of a school which participates in the Community Eligibility Provision.

2. This act shall take effect in the first full school year following the date of enactment.

STATEMENT

Under the provisions of the bill, 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 must provide to the parent or guardian of each student:

- a hardcopy of information on the National School Lunch Program and the federal School Breakfast Program; and
- a hardcopy application to apply for the school lunch and school breakfast programs and instructions for completing the application.

The school district may also provide the information and application electronically, through the usual means by which the district communicates with parents electronically. The application and information must be in a language that the parent or guardian understands. The district must provide assistance to a parent or guardian in filling out an application for school meal programs, if the parent or guardian requests this assistance.

The bill includes a provision that would require the parent or guardian to either submit an application to apply for the school lunch and school breakfast programs or submit a signed card provided by the school district indicating that the parent or guardian has received the application and information and is not interested in participating in the school lunch and school breakfast programs. If the school district does not receive an application or a signed card, the school district is required to make at least one attempt to contact the student's parent or guardian and request that the parent submit either an application or signed card.

The bill provides that when a student owes money for the equivalent of five or more school meals, the school district must make at least two attempts to contact the student's parent or guardian and request that the parent or guardian fill out an application for the school lunch and school breakfast programs.

The provisions of the bill will not apply to schools which participate in the Community Eligibility Provision. The Community Eligibility Provision is a federal reimbursement alternative for eligible, high-poverty local educational agencies and schools participating in both the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Under the Community Eligibility Provision, schools that serve a high proportion of low-income

students through direct certification are permitted to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students rather than collecting individual applications and limiting the meals to only income-eligible students.