SENATE, No. 1584

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 13, 2020

Sponsored by:
Senator JAMES BEACH
District 6 (Burlington and Camden)

SYNOPSIS

"The Smarter Lunchroom Act;" promotes healthy food choices in school cafeterias.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ACT concerning healthy food choices in school cafeterias and supplementing Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "The Smarter Lunchroom Act."

2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. The overall health of children depends, in part, upon a balanced diet that provides sufficient energy and nutrients to support optimal growth and development;

b. In New Jersey over 1.37 million children are enrolled in public schools, and many of these children rely upon school cafeterias for their breakfast and lunch meals;

c. Despite school, State, and federal efforts to provide healthy and nutritious food options, nearly 24.7 percent of New Jersey children aged 10 through 17 are classified overweight or obese;

d. Researchers at the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs founded The Smarter Lunchroom Movement to combat the challenges that schools face in regard to student health and diet by designing simple, low to no-cost evidence-based tools that improve child eating behaviors in school cafeterias; and

e. Implementing the strategies of The Smarter Lunchroom Movement in New Jersey schools can have a positive and lasting impact on the overall health of students in the State.

3. The Commissioner of Education shall make every effort to assist, guide, and support school districts and nonpublic schools in planning, establishing, and implementing the strategies of The Smarter Lunchroom Movement. These strategies include but are not limited to:

a. Highlighting fruit and other nutritional foods by placing them near the cash register;

b. Identifying vegetables and other nutritional foods with creative names on labels and menu boards;

c. Arranging white milk in the front of the drink cooler; and

d. Placing the most nutrient-filled entre first in the serving line and first on the menu board.

4. Information on The Smarter Lunchroom Movement shall be provided in a "user-friendly" format using plain language on the Department of Education's Internet site in an easily accessible location. At a minimum, the provided information shall:

a. Define The Smarter Lunchroom Movement;

b. Provide a web link to The Smarter Lunchroom Movement website;

c. List examples of strategies that support The Smarter Lunchroom Movement; and

d. Include the Smarter Lunchroom Self-Assessment Scorecard.

5. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill promotes healthy food choices in school cafeterias by encouraging school districts, public schools, and nonpublic schools to adopt the strategies of The Smarter Lunchroom Movement. The Smarter Lunchroom Movement was founded by researchers at the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs and offers simple, low to no-cost evidence-based tools that improve child eating behaviors in school cafeterias.

The bill requires the Commissioner of Education to make every effort to assist, guide, and support school districts, public schools, and nonpublic schools in planning, establishing, and implementing the strategies of The Smarter Lunchroom Movement. Strategies include highlighting fruit and other nutritional foods by placing them near the cash register and placing the most nutrient-filled entre first in the serving line and first on the menu board. The bill also requires that information on The Smarter Lunchroom Movement be available for public inspection on the Department of Education's Internet site in a user-friendly, plain language format.

In New Jersey, nearly 24.7 percent of children aged 10 through 17 are classified overweight or obese. Because many of the over 1.37 million children enrolled in New Jersey public schools rely upon school cafeterias for their breakfast and lunch meals, schools are in an influential position to combat this growing trend. By implementing the strategies of The Smarter Lunchroom Movement, schools can have a positive and lasting impact on the overall health of students in the State.