

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 84

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 7, 2020

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Senate Resolution No. 84.

This resolution urges the President and Congress of the United States to enact the “CARE for Kids Act of 2019,” to provide automatic eligibility for free school meals to American children who are being raised by grandparents or relatives other than their parents.

The federal School Breakfast Program (SBP) and the federal National School Lunch Program (NSLP) provide nutritionally balanced, free meals to millions of American children each school day. Under the SBP and the NSLP, children may be determined categorically eligible for free school meals through participation in certain federal assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or based on the child’s status as a homeless, migrant, runaway, or foster child. Additionally, children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for free school meals.

Many children are excluded from categorical eligibility to receive free school meals because they have moved out of the foster care system and are in the care of grandparents or other relatives who have adopted them or have become their legal guardians. This is the case for more than 7.8 million children under the age of 18 who live in homes where the householders are grandparents or relatives other than their parents.

The federal “Caregivers Access and Responsible Expansion (CARE) for Kids Act of 2019” provides automatic eligibility for free school meals to: children being raised by a relative who receives adoption or guardianship assistance; children being raised by grandparents or other relatives due to placement by a state or tribal welfare agency; and children living in “grandfamily” housing or receiving housing assistance under the “Native American Housing and Self-Determination Act of 1996.”