

STATE OF NEW YORK

7376--A

2017-2018 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

April 25, 2017

Introduced by M. of A. SIMON, HARRIS, SEPULVEDA, TITONE, ORTIZ, WALKER, D'URSO, GOTTFRIED, GALEF, PALUMBO, RIVERA -- Multi-Sponsored by -- M. of A. BRONSON, CAHILL, COOK, JONES -- read once and referred to the Committee on Education -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to providing for the rights of students and responsibilities of schools participating in free or reduced-price meal programs

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new section 908 to
2 read as follows:

3 § 908. Hunger free schools. 1. For purposes of this section, the
4 following terms shall have the following meanings:

5 (a) "meal application" shall mean an application for free or reduced-
6 price meals pursuant to the national school lunch program and school
7 breakfast program; and

8 (b) "school" shall mean any institution within the state that provides
9 primary or secondary education.

10 2. (a) A school shall provide:

11 (i) a free, printed meal application in every school enrollment pack-
12 et, or if the school chooses to use an electronic meal application,
13 provide in school enrollment packets an explanation of the electronic
14 meal application process and instructions for how parents or guardians
15 may request a paper application at no cost; and

16 (ii) meal applications and instructions in a language that parents and
17 guardians understand. If a parent or guardian cannot read or understand
18 a meal application, the school shall offer assistance in completing such
19 application.

20 (b) If a school becomes aware that a student who has not submitted a
21 meal application is eligible for free or reduced-price meals, the school

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 shall complete and file an application for the student under the author-
2 ity granted by Title 7, Section 245.6(d) of the Code of Federal Regu-
3 lations.

4 (c) Paragraphs (a) and (b) of this subdivision do not apply to a
5 school that provides free meals to all students in a year in which the
6 school does not collect meal applications from students.

7 3. (a) Regardless of whether or not a student has money to pay for a
8 meal or owes money for earlier meals, a school:

9 (i) shall provide a United States department of agriculture reimbursa-
10 ble meal to a student who requests one, unless the student's parent or
11 guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to
12 withhold a meal; and

13 (ii) shall not throw away a meal after it has been served because of
14 the student's inability to pay for the meal or because money is owed for
15 earlier meals.

16 (b) If a student owes money for five or more meals, a school shall:

17 (i) check the state list of students categorically eligible for free
18 meals to determine if the student is categorically eligible; and

19 (ii) contact the student's parent and guardian with written and oral
20 communications, not including the application or instructions included
21 in a school enrollment packet, to encourage meal application submission
22 and offer assistance in completing the application.

23 4. A school shall not:

24 (a) publicly identify, shame, stigmatize, or treat differently a
25 student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt;

26 (b) require a student who cannot pay for a meal or who owes a meal
27 debt to do chores or other work to pay for meals;

28 (c) deny any student from participating in afterschool programs or
29 other extracurricular activities because the student cannot pay for a
30 meal or owes a meal debt; and

31 (d) take disciplinary action that directly results in denying or
32 delaying a student the same meal that is available to other students and
33 substituting it with an alternate meal because a student cannot pay for
34 a meal or owes a meal debt.

35 5. A school shall direct communications about a student's meal debt to
36 a parent or guardian and not the student. Nothing in this section
37 prohibits a school from sending a student home with a letter addressed
38 to a parent or guardian provided that it is done in a way that does not
39 stigmatize the student such as in an unmarked envelope.

40 6. A school shall not require a parent or guardian to pay fees or
41 costs from collection agencies hired to collect a meal debt.

42 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.