

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1104

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 13, 2020

The Assembly Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 1104 with committee amendments.

As amended, this bill is entitled the “Hunger-Free Students’ Bill of Rights Act.” Under the provisions of the bill a school district is not permitted to:

- publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot pay for a school meal, 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;
- require a student who cannot pay for a school meal to do chores or other work to pay for the school meal; or
- require a student to discard a school meal after it has been served because of the student’s inability to pay for a school meal or because money is owed for previously provided school meals.

The bill also establishes a protocol to be used when a student owes money for the equivalent of five or more school meals. The protocol is designed to help school districts identify students who would be eligible for free or reduced price meals and offer the parents of students, assistance in applying for the programs.

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:

- information on the National School Lunch Program and the federal School Breakfast Program;
- an application to apply for the school lunch and school breakfast programs and instructions for completing the application; and
- information on the rights of students under the provisions of this bill and under section 1 of P.L.2015, c.15 (C.18A:33-21), regarding the protocol which must be followed by a district in order to deny a student a school meal when a school meal bill is in arrears.

In addition, the bill provides that a school district liaison for the education of homeless children must 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.

Finally, the bill clarifies that the provisions of section 1 of P.L.2015, c.15 (C.18A:33-21) may not be construed to require a school district to deny or restrict access to school breakfast or school lunch to a student whose school breakfast or school lunch bill is in arrears. The bill also amends that same section of law to require that, if a student's parent or guardian has not made full payment of a student's school breakfast or school lunch bill in arrears by the end of 10 school days, a school district must provide notice of any action to be taken by the school district in response to a student's school breakfast or school lunch bill being in arrears.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amended the bill to require that, if a student's parent or guardian has not made full payment of a student's school breakfast or school lunch bill in arrears by the end of 10 school days, a school district must provide notice of any action to be taken by the school district in response to a student's school breakfast or school lunch bill being in arrears. Under current law, a school district is required to provide notice that school breakfast or school lunch will not be served to the student beginning one week from the date of the second notice unless payment is made in full.