

ASSEMBLY, No. 3840

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 16, 2020

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District 6 (Burlington and Camden)

Assemblywoman AURA K. DUNN

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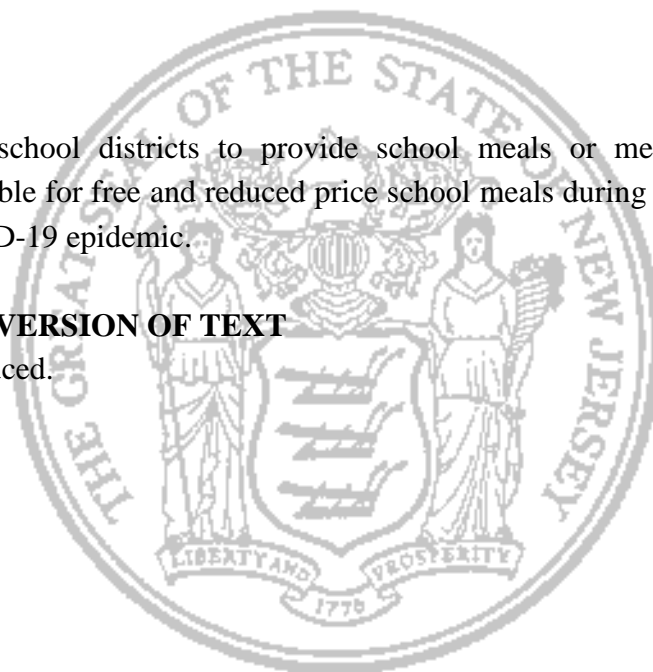
Assemblyman Chiaravalloti, Assemblywomen Jasey, Speight, Timberlake, Assemblymen Spearman, Holley, Wimberly, Assemblywoman Carter, Assemblyman Zwicker, Senators Stack, Cruz-Perez, Pou, Addiego, Scutari, T.Kean, Singer, Brown, Singleton and Turner

SYNOPSIS

Requires school districts to provide school meals or meal vouchers to students eligible for free and reduced price school meals during school closures due to COVID-19 epidemic.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/19/2020)

1 AN ACT concerning the provision of school meals during an
2 epidemic and supplementing chapter 33 of Title 18A of the New
3 Jersey Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7
8 1. a. In the event that a board of education is provided a
9 written directive by either the New Jersey Department of Health or
10 the health officer of the jurisdiction to institute a public health-
11 related closure due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the district shall
12 implement a program during the period of the school closure to
13 provide school meals to all students enrolled in the district who are
14 eligible for the free and reduced price school lunch and school
15 breakfast programs.

16 b. In the event of the closure, the school district shall identify
17 one or more school meal distribution sites that are walkable and
18 easily accessible to students in the district. The school district shall
19 collaborate with county and municipal government officials in
20 identifying appropriate sites. A school meal distribution site may
21 include, but need not be limited to: faith-based locations;
22 community centers, such as YMCAs; and locations in the school
23 district where summer meals are available. In a school district that
24 includes high density housing, the district shall make every effort to
25 identify a school meal distribution site in that housing area.

26 c. The school district shall identify students enrolled in the
27 district who are eligible for the free and reduced price school lunch
28 and school breakfast programs for whom a school meal distribution
29 site identified pursuant to subsection b. of this section is not within
30 walking distance. In the case of these students, the school district
31 shall distribute the school meals to the student's residence or to the
32 student's bus stop along an established bus route provided that the
33 student or the student's parent or guardian is present at the bus stop
34 for the distribution. Food distributed pursuant to this section may
35 include up to a total of three school days' worth of food per
36 delivery.

37 d. School districts may use school buses owned and operated
38 by the district to distribute school meals pursuant to this section. In
39 the case of a school district that does not own and operate its own
40 buses, the district may contract for the distribution of school meals
41 and these contracts shall not be subject to the public bidding
42 requirements pursuant to the "Public School Contracts Law,"
43 P.L.1977, c.114 (C.18A:18A-1 et seq.).

44 e. A school district shall collaborate, as feasible, with other
45 school districts and local governments to implement the program
46 required pursuant to this section in order to promote administrative
47 and operational efficiencies and cost savings.

1 2. In the event that a board of education is provided a written
2 directive by either the New Jersey Department of Health or the
3 health officer of the jurisdiction to institute a public health-related
4 closure due to the COVID-19 epidemic, and the school district is
5 unable to provide school meals pursuant to section 1 of this act to a
6 student who is eligible for a free and reduced price meal, the school
7 district shall establish a food voucher system for these students, in
8 accordance with criteria promulgated by the Commissioner of
9 Education, in consultation with the Commissioner of Human
10 Services. The food voucher system shall provide funds to enable
11 these students to access nutritious food at food retail stores.

12
13 3. The State shall bear any costs not reimbursed by the federal
14 government which are incurred by the school districts in
15 effectuating the provisions of this act. The State shall maximize the
16 waiver flexibilities being provided by the federal government to
17 address the loss of meals for low-income children due to COVID-
18 19-related school closures.

19
20 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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25 This bill provides direction to school districts for the provision
26 of school meals to students if the districts are directed by either the
27 New Jersey Department of Health or the health officer of the
28 jurisdiction to institute a public health-related closure due to the
29 COVID-19 epidemic. Under these circumstances, the district is
30 required to implement a program during the period of the school
31 closure to provide school meals to all district students who are
32 eligible for the free and reduced price school lunch and school
33 breakfast programs. Under the program, the school district is
34 required to collaborate with county and municipal government
35 officials to identify one or more school meal distribution sites that
36 are walkable and easily accessible to students in the district. The
37 bill lists possible sites including, but not limited to: faith-based
38 locations; community centers, such as YMCAs; and locations in the
39 school district where summer meals are available. The bill
40 provides, however, that if there is high density housing in a school
41 district, the district must make every effort to identify a school meal
42 distribution site in that housing area.

43 The bill also requires school districts to identify students for
44 whom a school meal distribution site is not within walking distance.
45 In the case of these students, the school district will distribute the
46 school meals to the student's residence or to the student's bus stop
47 along an established bus route provided that the student or the
48 student's parent or guardian is present at the bus stop for the

1 distribution. Food distributed to the student's residence may
2 include up to a total of three school days' worth of food per
3 delivery.

4 School districts may use school buses owned and operated by the
5 district to distribute school meals pursuant to the provisions of the
6 bill. In the case of a school district that does not own and operate
7 its own buses, the district is permitted to contract for the
8 distribution of school meals and these contracts will not be subject
9 to the public bidding requirements pursuant to the "Public School
10 Contracts Law," P.L.1977, c.114 (C.18A:18A-1 et seq.).

11 If a school district is unable to provide school meals through
12 school meal distribution sites or through distributions at the
13 student's residence, the school district must establish a food
14 voucher system for these students. The food voucher system must
15 be established in accordance with criteria promulgated by the
16 Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the Commissioner
17 of Human Services. Under the food voucher system funds will be
18 provided to students to enable them to access nutritious food at food
19 retail stores.

20 Finally, the bill provides that the State will bear any costs not
21 reimbursed by the federal government which school districts incur
22 in effectuating the provisions of this bill. The State is required to
23 maximize the waiver flexibilities being provided by the federal
24 government to address the loss of meals for low-income children
25 due to COVID-19-related school closures.