

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

State of Arkansas
94th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2023

As Engrossed: S3/9/23
A Bill

SENATE BILL 308

By: Senators J. Dismang, C. Tucker
By: Representatives Vaught, McCullough

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT CONCERNING FEDERALLY FUNDED CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS; TO CREATE A MEANS BY WHICH STUDENTS WHO QUALIFY FOR REDUCED-PRICE MEALS AT SCHOOL RECEIVE FREE MEALS AT SCHOOL; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO CREATE A MEANS BY WHICH STUDENTS WHO QUALIFY FOR REDUCED-PRICE MEALS AT SCHOOL RECEIVE FREE MEALS AT SCHOOL.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 18, Subchapter 7, is amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

6-18-720. Free and reduced-price meals.

(a) Federal funds appropriated to the Department of Education for a child nutrition program shall be used to provide school breakfasts and lunches at no cost to each qualifying student.

(b)(1) A public school that serves a school breakfast or a school lunch as part of a child nutrition program shall not charge a qualifying student a reduced-price copayment for a school breakfast or a school lunch.

(2)(A) If necessary to comply with the requirements of this section, the department shall provide funds that have been disbursed to the department from the federal government for purposes of funding child nutrition programs to each public school that serves a school breakfast or a school lunch as part of a child nutrition program to cover the cost of



eliminating reduced-price copayments as required by subdivision (b)(1) of this section.

(B) If federal funds appropriated to the department for a child nutrition program are insufficient to provide a school breakfast or a school lunch at no cost under subdivision (b)(2)(A) of this section, the department shall use funds appropriated to the Public School Fund Account to provide a school breakfast or a school lunch not initially covered by federal funds under subsection (a) of this section.

(c)(1) Annually by November 15, the Department of Education shall report on and provide to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education an overview of each child nutrition program offered in public schools.

(2) The report required under subdivision (c)(1) of this section shall include without limitation:

(A) The procedure for applying for free or reduced-price meals in public schools; and

(B) The number of students who:

(i) Apply for free or reduced-price meals;

(ii) Are accepted to receive free or reduced-price meals;

(iii) Are denied from receiving free or reduced-price meals; and

(iv) Automatically qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on federal eligibility requirements.

(d)(1) Arkansas Legislative Audit shall audit the Arkansas Department of Education Child Nutrition Unit by December 15, 2023, and report the audit findings to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education.

(2) The audit required under subdivision (d)(1) of this section shall determine whether each public school's participation in a child nutrition program effectively:

(A) Serves the intent of the General Assembly to expand students' access to free meals in public schools; and

(B) Complies with federal and state law and rules.

(e) As used in this section:

(1) "Child nutrition program" includes the following as

established under the National School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1751 et seq., as it existed on January 1, 2023:

(A) The National School Lunch Program; or

(B) The School Breakfast Program; and

(2) "Qualifying student" means a kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) student enrolled in a public school who is eligible for receipt of a reduced-price meal in a child nutrition program.

/s/J. Dismang