

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1416

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to feeding hungry children through school breakfast and lunch programs and summer food service programs.

Brief Description: Feeding hungry children through school breakfast and lunch programs and summer food service programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Sullivan, Pettigrew, Walsh, Roberts, Haigh, Chase, Seaquist, Ormsby, Miloscia, Kagi, Haler, Hudgins, Morrell, O'Brien, Hinkle, Hunt, Priest, Green, Wallace, Conway, Dickerson, Kenney, Santos, Appleton, Hasegawa, Rolfes, Williams, Van De Wege, Maxwell, Carlyle, Goodman, Darneille, Simpson, Nelson, Driscoll, Moeller and White.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/6/09, 2/18/09 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Legislature to appropriate funds to eliminate the reduced-price copayment for breakfast for all students and eliminate the reduced-price lunch copayment for all students in schools with any of grades Preschool through 5.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, if funds are appropriated, to provide state support for summer food service programs and grants to start or expand summer food service.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Probst, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Hope, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cox, Dammeier, Hunt, Johnson, Liias, Maxwell, Orwall, Santos and Sullivan.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383)

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

Nearly all Washington school districts participate in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program to provide meals and snacks for students during the school day. Schools and other non-profit organizations can also participate in summer feeding programs that target areas with high numbers of low-income children. The costs of operating these programs are largely paid by the federal government, plus meal fees charged to students and a limited amount of required state matching funds. Children in families with incomes of less than 130 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for free meals; those with incomes up to 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. The reduced-price copayment for breakfast is 30 cents; for lunch the copayment is 40 cents. For the 2008-09 school year, there are 308,213 students signed up for free meals, and 92,455 signed up for reduced-price meals. This is 39.4 percent of total K-12 enrollment.

In 1993 the Legislature created the "Meals for Kids" initiative, which provided state funds to school districts to support operating costs of school breakfast programs and to provide grants to school districts to offset the costs of starting and maintaining summer feeding programs. In 2006 additional funding was provided to help schools with the costs of meals, plus eliminate the reduced-price copayment for breakfast. For the 2007-09 biennium, state funding for these three initiatives is \$5.2 million per year. The 2007-09 budget includes another enhancement: elimination of the reduced-price copayment for lunch for students in grades kindergarten through 3, which is \$1.6 million per year. State statutes pertaining to the Meals for Kids initiative mention operating cost support and summer food programs, but do not mention elimination of student copayments.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

To the maximum extent possible, the Legislature's intent is to maintain its current commitment to feed hungry low-income students in public schools at no cost, and to phase-in elimination of copayments for all meals for low-income students of all grade levels. The Legislature is required to appropriate sufficient funds for allocation to school districts to:

- eliminate the breakfast copayment for all students qualifying for reduced-price meals; and
- in any school that enrolls students in any of grades Preschool through 5, eliminate the lunch copayment for all students qualifying for reduced-price lunch in the school.

To the extent funds are appropriated, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must provide state support for summer food service programs. Funds must be used for operating costs, including costs of meals and labor.

To the extent funds are appropriated for grants to organizations to start or expand summer food service programs, the OSPI conducts two cycles of grants. A fall cycle of grants of up to \$20,000 can be used to build local program capacity, and a spring cycle of grants of up to \$5,000 can be used for expenses related to initiating a new program. Organizations receiving grants in the fall must provide evidence of successful community program development. The

OSPI must report to the Education Committees of the Legislature by January 15, 2011, on the use of the grants and outcomes related to summer food services programs.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The Legislature is required to appropriate funds to eliminate the lunch copayment for all students qualifying for reduced-price lunch in any school that has any of grades Preschool through 5, rather than Preschool through 6.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 18, 2009.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) A favorite time in an elementary school is breakfast. You see children eating a nutritious breakfast and know that this will enable them to focus on their reading, writing, and math rather than coming to school hungry. The current approach to eliminating the lunch copay is well-meaning, but nonsensical. Explain to a parent why a 3rd grader and a 5th grader in the same school from the same family are treated differently. This very much fits into the overall objective to eliminate child hunger. It's rough out there. We're living in a world with significant financial uncertainty. Children need the security of knowing that a nutritious breakfast and lunch are available. Recent declines in summer feeding programs are a concern. A new effort is needed to recruit and support them.

The bottom line is that hungry kids don't learn. They lose focus, act out, and daydream. They can't concentrate. The elimination of the breakfast copay resulted in a 59 percent increase in enrolled eligible children in one school district. Another high poverty school implemented full-day kindergarten for the first time and, as a result, all students get breakfast and lunch. Teachers report more than a full year's worth of progress in less than three months. This school has closed the achievement gap despite being more than 80 percent free and reduced lunch students. Food matters. Sometimes the food at schools is the only food a child gets. Even though it's only 30 or 40 cents, families struggle to pay. The food at school is often far more nutritious than the food the children get at home.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Sullivan, prime sponsor; Linda Stone, Children's Alliance; Lincoln Pierce, Washington School Nutrition Association; Debra Gary, Auburn School District; Elise DeGooyer, Northwest Harvest; Kelsey Beck, Food Lifeline; and Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.