

STATE OF MAINE

—
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-TWO

—
S.P. 540 - L.D. 1679

An Act Regarding Expanding Access to Free School Meals

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §6601-A, as amended by PL 2021, c. 212, §1, is further amended to read:

§6601-A. Free or reduced-price school meals; Internet-based school meal applications

The department shall contract for the development and implementation of an Internet-based application for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program under 7 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 210 and the School Breakfast Program under 7 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 220. The department shall make available to public schools the Internet-based application for free or reduced-price meals developed under this section on the department's publicly accessible website. The department shall make the Internet-based application in an understandable and uniform format and, to the maximum extent practicable, in a language that parents and legal guardians can understand. A public school may make the Internet-based application available for school meal applications on the public school's publicly accessible website. All public schools shall continue to distribute paper applications for school meals to all students. A public school is solely responsible for processing that school's online applications. Data submitted through the Internet-based application may not be visible to the department and must be transmitted directly to the applicable public school. All public schools shall accept data submitted through the Internet-based application.

Sec. 2. Department of Education to study free and reduced-price meals for publicly funded students at private schools approved for tuition purposes. The Department of Education shall conduct an analysis to determine the cost for the State to provide funding equal to the difference between the federal reimbursement for free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch under the national school breakfast and lunch programs in accordance with 7 Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 210 and 220 (2007) for each publicly funded student who:

1. Attends a private school approved for tuition purposes that enrolls 60% or more publicly funded students; and

2. Is ineligible for a free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch.

The Department of Education shall submit a report with its findings to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters no later than February 1, 2023. The joint standing committee having jurisdiction over education matters may submit legislation based on the report to the 131st Legislature in 2023.