

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to school meals; providing a short
 3 title; creating s. 1002.24, F.S.; providing
 4 definitions; requiring schools to provide certain
 5 information relating to free and reduced-price meals
 6 in specified formats; requiring schools to complete an
 7 application for free or reduced-price meals on a
 8 student's behalf under certain circumstances;
 9 providing an exemption to such requirements; requiring
 10 a specific liaison to work with the Department of
 11 Agriculture and Consumer Services to ensure certain
 12 students receive meals; providing duties and
 13 responsibilities of schools relating to the provision
 14 of meals and contacting and assisting a student's
 15 parent; prohibiting a school from taking specified
 16 actions relating to a student who cannot pay for a
 17 meal or owe a meal debt; prohibiting parents from
 18 paying specified fees or costs relating to meal debts;
 19 providing for rule making; providing an effective
 20 date.

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 22 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 24 Section 1. This act may be cited as the "Hunger-Free
 25 Students' Bill of Rights Act."

26 Section 2. Section 1002.24, Florida Statutes, is created
27 to read:

28 1002.24 Student access to school meals.-

29 (1) For purposes of this section the term:

30 (a) "Meal application" means an application for free or
31 reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program or
32 the School Breakfast Program.

33 (b) "School" means a public school or nonprofit private
34 school approved to participate in the National School Lunch
35 Program or the School Breakfast Program.

36 (2) (a) Each school must provide:

37 1. A free, printed meal application in every school
38 enrollment packet or, if the school chooses to use an electronic
39 meal application, an explanation of the electronic meal
40 application process and instructions for how a parent may
41 request a printed meal application at no cost.

42 2. A meal application and instructions in a language the
43 parent understands. If a parent cannot read or understand a meal
44 application, the school must offer assistance in completing the
45 application.

46 (b) If a school becomes aware that a student who has not
47 submitted a meal application is eligible for free or reduced-
48 price meals, the school shall complete and file a meal
49 application for the student pursuant Title 7, s. 245.6(d) of the
50 Code of Federal Regulations.

51 (c) Paragraphs (a) and (b) do not apply to a school that
52 provides free meals to all students for an entire school year
53 and does not collect meal applications.

54 (3) A school district's liaison for homeless children and
55 youths, required under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance
56 Act, 42 U.S.C. s. 11432, shall coordinate with the Department of
57 Agriculture and Consumer Services to ensure that homeless
58 children and youths receive free and reduced-price meals. This
59 subsection does not apply to nonprofit private schools.

60 (4) Regardless of whether or not a student has money to
61 pay for a meal or owes money for earlier meals, a school shall:

62 (a) Provide a United State Department of Agriculture
63 reimbursable meal to a student who requests one, unless a parent
64 has specifically provided written permission for the school to
65 withhold a meal.

66 (b) If the student owes money for five or more meals:

67 1. Check the state list of students categorically eligible
68 for free meals to determine if the student is categorically
69 eligible.

70 2. Make at least two attempts, not including the meal
71 application or instructions included in the enrollment packet,
72 to reach the student's parent and to request the parent complete
73 a meal application.

74 3. Require the principal, an assistant principal, or a
75 counselor to contact the parent to offer assistance with the

76 meal application, determine if there are other issues within the
77 household that have caused the student to have insufficient
78 funds to purchase a school meal, and offer any other appropriate
79 assistance.

80 (c) Direct all communications regarding a student's meal
81 debt to his or her parent. However, a school may send a letter
82 home with the student that is addressed to the parent.

83 (5) A school may not:

84 (a) Require a student to throw a meal away after it has
85 been served because of the student's inability to pay for the
86 meal or because money is owed for earlier meals.

87 (b) Publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot
88 pay for a meal or who owes a meal debt, including, but not
89 limited to, requiring a student to wear a wristband or hand
90 stamp.

91 (c) Require a student who cannot pay for a meal or who
92 owes a meal debt to do chores or other work to pay for meals.
93 This does not include chores or work required of all students
94 regardless of a meal debt.

95 (d) Require a parent to pay fees or costs from a
96 collection agency hired to collect a meal debt.

97 (6) The State Board of Education may adopt rules to
98 administer this section.

99 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.