

SENATE, No. 531

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2022 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

Senator JOSEPH F. VITALE

District 19 (Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Turner and Pou

SYNOPSIS

Requires public schools to comply with more stringent school lunch and breakfast nutrition standards adopted by USDA in 2012.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 2/10/2022)

1 AN ACT concerning school lunch and breakfast nutrition standards
2 and supplementing Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

3

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

6

7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. Child and adolescent obesity has reached epidemic levels in
9 the United States and poor diet combined with the lack of physical
10 activity negatively impacts students' health and their ability and
11 motivation to learn.

12 b. In New Jersey, the current obesity rate for children and
13 adolescents between the ages of 10 and 17 is 14.8 percent, which is
14 the 28th highest child and adolescent obesity rate in the nation.

15 c. Over the past 15 years, policymakers have taken significant
16 steps to implement new approaches through the National School
17 Lunch Program and federal School Breakfast Program in order to
18 address child and adolescent obesity.

19 d. Federally subsidized meal programs, which include the
20 National School Lunch and federal School Breakfast Program, are
21 required to have nutrition standards that meet specific dietary
22 guidelines. These guidelines can help prevent chronic diseases like
23 obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, and Type 2 diabetes.

24 e. Under the nutrition regulations adopted in July 2012 under the
25 federal "Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010," public schools
26 were required to reduce the amount of calories, fat, and sodium in
27 school cafeterias and increase offerings of whole grains, fruits and
28 vegetables, and nonfat milk to the roughly 32 million students who
29 receive federally subsidized meals.

30 f. Public schools have worked diligently to overcome
31 operational challenges in the National School Lunch and federal
32 School Breakfast Programs created by meeting sodium, whole grain-
33 rich, and milk requirements and, by 2016, at least 90 percent of
34 schools were compliant in every state.

35 g. These more stringent nutrition standards have helped to
36 reduce the obesity rate for children and adolescents between the ages
37 of 10 and 17.

38 h. However, the United States Department of Agriculture has
39 recently announced its plans to lower nutrition standards for grains,
40 flavored milks, and sodium in school cafeterias that were part of the
41 regulations adopted in 2012 under the "Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids
42 Act of 2010."

43 i. Beginning next school year, schools can request an exemption
44 from the whole grain requirements and delay the sodium mandate and
45 schools will also be able to serve one percent flavored milk instead
46 of nonfat.

47 j. It is important for public schools in the State to abide by the
48 more stringent nutrition regulations that were adopted in 2012 under

1 the “Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010” in order for the State
2 to continue to reduce the obesity rate for children and adolescents.

3

4 2. a. A public school shall comply with the nutrition standards
5 for the National School Lunch Program and federal School Breakfast
6 Program adopted by the United States Department of Agriculture, as
7 published in Volume 77, Number 17 of the Federal Register dated
8 January 26, 2012, or any more stringent nutrition standards.

9 b. All reimbursable meals under the National School Lunch
10 Program and the federal School Breakfast Program shall comply with
11 the nutrition standards for the National School Lunch Program and
12 federal School Breakfast Program adopted by the United States
13 Department of Agriculture, as published in Volume 77, Number 17
14 of the Federal Register dated January 26, 2012, or any more stringent
15 nutrition standards.

16

17 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

18

19

20 STATEMENT

21

22 This bill would require all public schools to comply with the
23 previous nutrition standards for the National School Lunch Program
24 and federal School Breakfast Program that were adopted by the
25 United States Department of Agriculture and published in Volume
26 77, Number 17 of the Federal Register dated January 26, 2012, or any
27 more stringent nutrition standards.

28 Child and adolescent obesity has reached epidemic levels in the
29 United States and poor diet combined with the lack of physical
30 activity negatively impacts students’ health and their ability and
31 motivation to learn.

32 Over the past 15 years, policymakers have taken significant steps
33 to implement new approaches through the National School Lunch
34 Program and federal School Breakfast Program in order to address
35 child and adolescent obesity. Federally subsidized meal programs,
36 which include the National School Lunch and federal School
37 Breakfast Program, are required to have nutrition standards that meet
38 specific dietary guidelines. These guidelines can help prevent chronic
39 diseases like obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, and Type 2
40 diabetes.

41 Under the nutrition regulations adopted in July 2012 under the
42 federal “Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010,” public schools
43 were required to reduce the amount of calories, fat, and sodium in
44 school cafeterias and increase offerings of whole grains, fruits and
45 vegetables, and nonfat milk to the roughly 32 million students who
46 receive federally subsidized meals. These more stringent nutrition
47 standards have helped to reduce the obesity rate for children and
48 adolescents between the ages of 10 and 17. However, the United

S531 RUIZ, VITALE

4

- 1 States Department of Agriculture has recently announced its plans to
- 2 lower nutrition standards for grains, flavored milks, and sodium in
- 3 school cafeterias that were part of the regulations adopted in 2012
- 4 under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.