ASSEMBLY, No. 5736

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 29, 2026

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman VERLINA REYNOLDS-JACKSON
District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

SYNOPSIS

Requires school districts to provide 30-minute lunch period for students.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ACT concerning lunch periods for students and supplementing chapter 33 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

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

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. Health experts recommend at least 20 minutes of seated eating time for student lunch periods.

b. The body takes 20 minutes to register fullness, and students with an abbreviated lunch period are more likely to overeat or undereat as a result.

c. A study of secondary school students found that shorter lunch periods were associated with significantly lower odds of eating fruits and vegetables daily and higher odds of eating unhealthy food daily.

d. When factoring in lunch-line wait times and class period transitions, a 30-minute lunch period provides the additional time necessary to ensure each student has an adequate amount of time to eat lunch.

e. It is altogether fitting and proper for the Legislature to mandate a 30-minute lunch period for all school districts so that students can be well-nourished, achieve better academic results, experience fewer absences, and display improved physical and mental well-being.

2. a. Beginning with the first full school year following the date of enactment of this act, a school district shall provide on each full school day a lunch period of at least 30 minutes.

b. A school district shall not require any student to attend more than five hours of instructional time without providing the student with a lunch period.

c. The daily lunch period required pursuant to this section shall not be combined with the daily recess period required pursuant to section 1 of P.L.2018, c.73 (C.18A:35-4.31).

d. The provisions of this section shall not apply to students enrolled in a half-day program.

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill requires school districts to provide on each full school day, a lunch period of at least 30 minutes for all students enrolled in the district, other than students enrolled in a half-day program.

Under the bill, school districts would be prohibited from requiring any student to attend more than five hours of instructional

time without providing the student with a lunch period. School districts are not permitted under the bill to combine the daily lunch period requirement with the daily recess period of 20 minutes required under current law for students in grades kindergarten through five.