

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 154

BY SENATOR ERDEY

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the state Department of Education to establish a committee to study and develop mechanisms and processes whereby every student is served a meal at school, regardless of the student's ability to pay.

WHEREAS, it is well documented that the learning capacity of a hungry child is significantly diminished and no child should ever go hungry at school because of inability to pay for the meal; and

WHEREAS, due to Louisiana's high rate of poverty, it is not uncommon for a student to be unable to pay for a meal at school; and

WHEREAS, although accumulated debt for unpaid meals represents a burden upon school governing authorities, a student should never be held responsible for a parent's debt; and

WHEREAS, a student should not be publicly named, shamed, humiliated, stigmatized, denied school privileges, excluded from school activities, or served a smaller or significantly different meal than other students because he cannot pay for a meal or owes money for a meal; and

WHEREAS, the federal Community Eligibility Provision option allows schools and school districts that meet federal guidelines to serve breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students without having to have individual students apply for and qualify for free and reduced lunch; and

WHEREAS, it is incumbent upon the state and the governing authority of every public elementary and secondary school to ensure that every student receives a nutritious meal at school.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the state Department of Education to establish a committee to study and develop mechanisms and processes whereby every student is served a meal at school, regardless of the student's ability to pay.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee shall be composed of the following members:

- (1) The state superintendent of education, or his designee.
- (2) The Director of Food and Nutrition Services for the state Department of Education.
- (3) The secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services, or his designee.
- (4) The executive director of the Louisiana School Boards Association, or his designee.
- (5) The executive director of the Louisiana Association of Public Charter schools, or his designee.
- (6) The executive director of the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents, or his designee.
- (7) The executive director of the Louisiana Association of Principals, or his designee.
- (8) The president of the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, or his designee.
- (9) The president of the Louisiana Association of Educators, or his designee.
- (10) The president of the School Nutrition Association of Louisiana, or his designee.
- (11) The executive director of the Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana, or his designee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the committee shall, at a minimum:

- (1) Gather data from each public school governing authority on each instance in which a student was either denied a meal or was served an alternative meal because of inability to pay during the past three school years.
- (2) Determine the current level of debt carried by public school governing authorities for unpaid student meals and how providing a United States Department of Agriculture reimbursable meal to every student, regardless of ability to pay, would impact that debt.
- (3) Develop a mechanism whereby the state Department of Education will provide assistance to public school governing authorities in determining eligibility for and making application for participation in the federal Community Eligibility Provision option.
- (4) Develop procedures whereby the state Department of Education will provide

assistance to public school governing authorities in maximizing the number of parents who fill out an application for free or reduced price meals under the United States Department of Agriculture's Income Eligibility Guidelines.

(5) Identification of any and all available funding streams, including state and federal grants, that public school governing authorities can utilize to offset any debt incurred from unpaid student meals.

(6) Development of a statewide, uniform policy that requires public school governing authorities to direct all communication regarding amounts owed for a student's meals to the student's parent and not the student.

(7) Any other considerations, actions, or policies that the committee believes could reduce the number of students who are denied a United States Department of Agriculture reimbursable meal.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the first meeting of the committee shall be called by the state superintendent of education not later than August 15, 2018, and the committee shall select such officers as it deems necessary at that meeting.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that members of the committee shall serve without compensation, but may be paid such per diem or be reimbursed for actual expenses as determined by the appointing authority.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the state Department of Education shall submit a report of the committee's findings and recommendations to the Senate Committee on Education and the House Committee on Education, not later than March 1, 2019.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the state superintendent of education, the executive director of the Louisiana School Boards Association, and the executive director of the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE