

Subject School Meals; Increasing Funding and Modifying Policy

Authors Carlson, L. and others

Analyst Tim Strom

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Overview

The federal government largely funds the school meals programs. Students are eligible for free meals if their family income is 130 percent of the poverty level or less. Students are eligible for reduced-price meals if their family income is under 185 percent of the federal poverty level. Federal funds pay a base level of \$3.41 for each free lunch served, \$3.01 for each reduced-price lunch served, and \$0.32 for each fully-paid student lunch. These federal aid amounts are increased for severe need buildings and performance-based awards.

Minnesota pays an additional 12.5 cents for each lunch served to students for overall support to food service programs, and for reduced-price eligible students, the state pays an additional 40 cents per lunch served, making those lunches free to all reduced-price eligible students.

H.F. 4075 adds additional state funding to school meals programs to provide free meals to students whose family income is above the reduced-price meal eligibility level—185 percent of the federal poverty level (\$47,638 for a family of four) and below 200 percent of the federal poverty level at a cost of roughly \$8.5 million per year.

H.F. 4075 requires participants in the national school lunch program to adopt a meals policy, and provide meals in a respectful manner.

Summary

Section	Description
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1	School meals aid; school meal policy.
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Subdivision 1. School meals policies. Requires participants in the national school lunch program (the providers of the meals) to adopt and post a school meals policy. Requires the written policy to be reasonable, maintain student dignity,

Section	Description
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ensure that qualifying students are always served a reimbursable meal, and that no meals are removed once served to a student.

Subd. 1a. School meal aid amounts. Separates the state funding for school meals into a separate subdivision and adds language requiring the state to pay for the full cost of the meals served to students whose family incomes are between 185 percent and 200 percent of the poverty levy.

Subd. 4. No fees. Prohibits a participant from denying school lunch to a student who qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch, regardless of whether the student has an outstanding balance in the student's meal account due to a la carte purchases or for any other reason.

Subd. 5. Respectful treatment. Requires a participant to provide meals to participating students in a respectful manner and conform to the school meals policy. Prohibits certain reminders of outstanding meal balances, and prohibits limiting student participation in school activities due to unpaid student meal balances. Requires the commissioner to send a letter of noncompliance to a participant that does not provide meals to participating students in a respectful manner, and the participant to respond and remedy the practice within 60 days.

2 **Free and reduced-price meals.**

For school meal purposes, includes in the definition of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals students whose family income is between 185 and 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

3 **Appropriations; school lunch.**

Increases the appropriation for school lunch by an unspecified amount to pay for the costs of serving free meals to students from families with incomes between 185 and 200 percent of the federal poverty level.



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