

1 State of Arkansas
2 94th General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2023
4

A Bill

SENATE BILL 477

5 By: Senators J. Dismang, C. Tucker
6 By: Representatives Vaught, McCullough
7

For An Act To Be Entitled

9 AN ACT CONCERNING FEDERALLY FUNDED CHILD NUTRITION
10 PROGRAMS; TO CREATE A MEANS BY WHICH STUDENTS WHO
11 QUALIFY FOR REDUCED-PRICE MEALS AT SCHOOL RECEIVE
12 FREE MEALS AT SCHOOL; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.
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Subtitle

15 TO CREATE A MEANS BY WHICH STUDENTS WHO
16 QUALIFY FOR REDUCED-PRICE MEALS AT SCHOOL
17 RECEIVE FREE MEALS AT SCHOOL.
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21 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
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23 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 18, Subchapter 7, is amended
24 to add an additional section to read as follows:

25 6-18-720. Free and reduced-price meals.

26 (a) Federal funds appropriated to the Department of Education for a
27 child nutrition program shall be used to provide school breakfasts and
28 lunches at no cost to each qualifying student.

29 (b)(1) A public school that serves a school breakfast or a school
30 lunch as part of a child nutrition program shall not charge a qualifying
31 student a reduced-price copayment for a school breakfast or a school lunch.

32 (2)(A) If necessary to comply with the requirements of this
33 section, the department shall provide funds that have been disbursed to the
34 department from the federal government for purposes of funding child
35 nutrition programs to each public school that serves a school breakfast or a
36 school lunch as part of a child nutrition program to cover the cost of



1 eliminating reduced-price copayments as required by subdivision (b)(1) of
2 this section.

3 (B) If federal funds appropriated to the department for a
4 child nutrition program are insufficient to provide a school breakfast or a
5 school lunch at no cost under subdivision (b)(2)(A) of this section, the
6 department shall use funds as authorized by law to provide a school breakfast
7 or a school lunch not initially covered by federal funds under subsection (a)
8 of this section or other funds as authorized by law.

9 (c)(1) Annually by November 15, the Department of Education shall
10 report on and provide to the House Committee on Education and the Senate
11 Committee on Education an overview of each child nutrition program offered in
12 public schools.

13 (2) The report required under subdivision (c)(1) of this section
14 shall include without limitation:

15 (A) The procedure for applying for free or reduced-price
16 meals in public schools; and

17 (B) The number of students who:

18 (i) Apply for free or reduced-price meals;

19 (ii) Are accepted to receive free or reduced-price
20 meals;

21 (iii) Are denied from receiving free or reduced-
22 price meals; and

23 (iv) Automatically qualify for free or reduced-price
24 meals based on federal eligibility requirements.

25 (d)(1) Arkansas Legislative Audit shall audit the Arkansas Department
26 of Education Child Nutrition Unit by December 15, 2023, and report the audit
27 findings to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on
28 Education.

29 (2) The audit required under subdivision (d)(1) of this section
30 shall determine whether each public school's participation in a child
31 nutrition program effectively:

32 (A) Serves the intent of the General Assembly to expand
33 students' access to free meals in public schools; and

34 (B) Complies with federal and state law and rules.

35 (e) As used in this section:

36 (1) "Child nutrition program" includes the following as

1 established under the National School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1751 et seq., as
2 it existed on January 1, 2023:

3 (A) The National School Lunch Program; or

4 (B) The School Breakfast Program; and

5 (2) "Qualifying student" means a kindergarten through grade
6 twelve (K-12) student enrolled in a public school who is eligible for receipt
7 of a reduced-price meal in a child nutrition program.

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