



HOUSE BILL 259: 2023 Appropriations Act, Sec. 7.59: CEP Meal Program Incentive

2023-2024 General Assembly

Committee:		Date:	November 29, 2023
Introduced by:		Prepared by:	Samantha Yarborough Staff Attorney
Analysis of:	Sec. 7.59 of S.L. 2023-134		

OVERVIEW: Section 7.59 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to establish the CEP Meal Program Incentive for the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium, to expand public school participation in the federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program to increase the number of students with access to healthy, cost-free school breakfast and lunch. The incentive program will be available to public school units for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

A public school unit or school within a public school unit is eligible for the incentive program if the unit or school qualifies for the CEP program but did not participate in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. By January 15, 2024, DPI must develop the application for the incentive program and make it available. Public school units and schools will submit their applications by March 1, 2024. The application must include at least the following:

- The school or schools that will participate in the CEP program.
- The Identified Student Percentage (ISP) for the school or schools for the 2024-2025 school year.
- The number of students enrolled for the 2024-2025 school year.
- The participation rates in the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs for the 2023-2024 school year.

Schools will be selected by April 30, 2024. If there are insufficient funds to award grants to all eligible units and schools, DPI must first prioritize awarding grants to units and schools with an ISP of greater than 55% and then prioritize the schools that will draw the greatest federal match. The grants will provide State reimbursement to cover up to the portion of the cost of meals that is not covered by the federal reimbursement. Schools receiving the incentive must offer breakfast after the bell and in the classroom.

No later than January 1, 2025, DPI must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on at least the following information:

- The number of schools that utilized the incentive.
- The number of students that received free meals that would not have otherwise received free meals.
- The amount of federal and State money participating public school units and schools received.
- Any increase on student success due to the school's utilization of the incentive and participation in the program.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

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