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Breakfast After the Bell Legislation Becomes Law

BOSTON (8/11/2020) – The Massachusetts Legislature recently passed legislation to fight childhood hunger and boost participation rates in school breakfast programs in schools with high percentages of students from low-income families in the Commonwealth. The bill, *An Act regarding breakfast after the bell*, would require all public K-12 schools with 60 percent or more students eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the federal National School Lunch Program to offer breakfast after the instructional day begins. The bill was signed into law shortly after.

“Students cannot focus and excel in the classroom if they are hungry,” said **Senator Cindy F. Friedman (D-Arlington)**. “When children have access to nutritious meals, they are happier, healthier, and perform better at school. This bill continues the fight against food insecurity by ensuring that more students don’t have to struggle with hunger while at school. Thank you to my legislative colleagues for continually putting the health and well-being of our kids above all else.”

"No student should have to go to class hungry," said **Representative Ken Gordon (D - Bedford)**. "For many students whose families struggle with food insecurity, this second meal may be the only reliable access to nutritious food for these students. I'm proud that we took this critical step".

Massachusetts currently requires all schools with high percentages of students from low-income families to provide breakfast to every eligible student. However, because breakfast is typically offered before the bell and in the cafeteria, participation levels are low—less than 40 percent—compared to 80-90 percent participation for free and reduced lunch. Moving breakfast from before the bell to after the bell is a proven strategy to boost breakfast participation and ensure that all students have the nutrition they need to start their day ready to learn.

This legislation would require schools across Massachusetts serving low-income students to offer breakfast after the start of the instructional day through a variety of delivery models, including breakfast

in the classroom, grab-and-go, and second-chance breakfast. This flexibility allows school districts to select the model that best fits their students' needs.

As a federally reimbursed program, Breakfast After the Bell has the potential to provide up to \$25 million statewide to Massachusetts school districts that increase participation rates to 80 percent and above. These payments are made directly to school nutrition departments, helping to support jobs, update kitchen equipment, and provide healthier menu options.

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