

HB 1574-FN - AS AMENDED BY THE HOUSE

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2026 SESSION

26-2877

12/08

HOUSE BILL

1574-FN

AN ACT relative to the extension of free and reduced price breakfast and lunch for students under the age of 22 and making an appropriation therefor.

SPONSORS: Rep. Weinstein, Rock. 10; Rep. Cornell, Hills. 22; Rep. Selig, Straf. 10; Rep. Sorensen, Rock. 28

COMMITTEE: Education Funding

AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill extends breakfast and lunch aid for all students that are the age of 21 who previously qualified for the National School Lunch Program or National School Breakfast Program at the age of 20. The bill also permits participating schools as eligible to receive reimbursements for school breakfasts and lunches that are provided to qualifying students and makes an appropriation for such purpose.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.
Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Six

AN ACT relative to the extension of free and reduced price breakfast and lunch for students under the age of 22 and making an appropriation therefor.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 1 Statement of Findings. The general court finds that:

2 I. The state of New Hampshire recognizes the importance of supporting the health and
3 nutritional needs of special education students with disabilities who, under recent changes by the
4 department of education, may continue their education beyond the age of 21.

5 II. The current system does not provide access to free and reduced lunch benefits at age 21,
6 creating barriers to access and potentially compromising the well-being of these students.

7 2 New Paragraph; Free and Reduced Meals Expanded for Students Over 21. Amend RSA
8 189:11-a by inserting after paragraph I the following new paragraph:

9 I-a.(a) Any student who is 21 years of age, enrolled in their resident school district or a
10 chartered public school, and who qualified for the National School Lunch Program or the National
11 School Breakfast Program at age 20 shall remain eligible to receive breakfasts and lunches at rates
12 consistent with applicable federal standards until the earliest of the following occurs:

- 13 (1) The student reaches 22 years of age;
- 14 (2) The student graduates from school;
- 15 (3) The student withdraws from school; or
- 16 (4) The student otherwise completes the student's educational program.

17 (b) All public school districts and chartered public schools that participate in the
18 National School Lunch Program or the National School Breakfast Program shall be eligible for
19 reimbursement for breakfasts and lunches served to qualifying students at the reimbursement rates
20 established under each applicable federal program by the department of education consistent with
21 this section.

22 (c) For any meal served to a qualifying student under this paragraph, reimbursement
23 shall first be sought under the applicable federal National School Lunch Program or National School
24 Breakfast Program to the maximum extent permitted by federal law. State reimbursement shall be
25 available only for meals that are not eligible for federal reimbursement. Nothing in this paragraph
26 shall be construed to permit duplicate reimbursement for the same meal.

27 (d) The department of education shall include, in its biennial budget and in each
28 subsequent budget submission, a specific request for funding sufficient to carry out the provisions of
29 this section. The governor is authorized to draw a warrant from the education trust fund to satisfy
30 the state's obligation under this paragraph.

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1 (e) The state board of education may adopt rules pursuant to RSA 541-A relative to the
2 administration of extended breakfast and lunch aid under this paragraph.

3 3 Appropriation. There is hereby appropriated the sum of \$80,000 for fiscal year ending June
4 30, 2027 to the department of education for the purpose of implementing and administering the
5 extended school meal eligibility and reimbursement program established under this act. The
6 governor is authorized to draw a warrant from the education trust fund to satisfy the state's
7 obligation under this act the amount not otherwise appropriated.

8 4 Applicability. RSA 189:11-a as inserted in section 2 of this act shall apply to all eligible
9 students enrolled beginning with the 2026-2027 school year.

10 5 Effective Date. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

**HB 1574-FN- FISCAL NOTE
AS INTRODUCED**

AN ACT authorizing school districts to extend free and reduced lunch benefits for special education students.

FISCAL IMPACT: This bill does not provide funding, nor does it authorize new positions.

Estimated State Impact				
	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Revenue Fund(s)</i>	None			
Expenditures*	\$0	<u>Meal Reimbursements to Schools</u> Up to \$145K Per Year DOE Position \$109K in FY 27, \$114K in FY 28, and \$119K in FY 29		
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	General Fund			
Appropriations*	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	None			

*Expenditure = Cost of bill

*Appropriation = Authorized funding to cover cost of bill

Estimated Political Subdivision Impact				
	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Local Revenue	\$0	Up to \$145K Per Year		
Local Expenditures	\$0	Indeterminable		

METHODOLOGY:

This bill, effective for the 2026-2027 school year, authorizes school boards to extend the Federal Free or Reduced Priced Meal Program eligibility only for special education students with an individualized education program (IEP), through age 22. Under this bill:

- The Department of Education will reimburse School Boards for free or reduced priced meals.
- School Boards will need to develop and utilize separate applications for any student over the age of 21 to determine eligibility, as the Federal Application cannot be used.
- The Department of Education will need to update the online claim reimbursement system to account for meals served not under the federal meals program.

To estimate the potential fiscal impact of this bill, the Department of Education has provided the following assumptions:

- The proposed legislation is not limited to School Districts who currently operate the Federal United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) National School Lunch Program.
- Currently there are 117 students with an IEP that are age 21 and one student with an IEP that is age 22.
 - It is unknown if the above students qualify for free or reduced priced meals.
 - Calculations will be made utilizing the current federal reimbursement for free meals.
- Each student eats both breakfast and lunch each school day.
- The number of school days is 180.
- The State will use the Federal Reimbursed Rates to reimburse local school districts for meals.
- Current federal reimbursement rates (School Year 25-26)
 - Breakfast
 - \$2.49 free
 - \$2.16 reduced
 - Lunch
 - \$4.69 free
 - \$4.29 reduced
- The state currently pays reimbursement for each breakfast meal served under the federal program at a rate of \$0.03 per each free and paid meal and \$0.30 per reduced priced meal.
- There is no state reimbursement for lunch.

To provide School Boards with reimbursement for free or reduced priced meals served to students with an IEP aged 21 to 22 would cost approximately \$144,645 per year utilizing the current data:

- Breakfast would cost approximately \$53,525 per year:
 - Total students with an IEP (118)
 - Federal Free Breakfast Reimbursement (\$2.49)
 - State Breakfast Reimbursement (\$.03)
 - 180 school days
 - Total estimated cost of breakfast reimbursement
 - $118 * (\$2.49 + \$0.03) * 180 = \$53,524.80$

- Lunch would cost approximately \$91,120 per year:
 - Total students with an IEP (118)
 - Federal Free Lunch Reimbursement (4.29)
 - 180 school days
 - Total estimated cost of lunch reimbursement
 - $118 * \$4.29 * 180 = \$91,119.60$

While this bill directs that the state shall reimburse school boards through the general fund, no appropriation from the general fund is included in the bill.

In addition to estimated reimbursements, the Department states it would need one position (miscellaneous business operations specialists (SOC 13-05, step 5), with an estimated total cost of \$109,000 in FY 2027, \$114,000 in FY 2028, and \$119,000 in FY 2029. This bill provides neither authorization nor appropriation for new personnel.

Lastly, using the above assumptions and calculations, the potential fiscal impact of this bill on local school districts is indeterminable. The cost to districts, if any, would be based on application development to determine eligibility, policy implementation, and actual participation.

AGENCIES CONTACTED:

Department of Education