

HB 1574-FN - AS INTRODUCED

2026 SESSION

26-2877

12/08

HOUSE BILL            ***1574-FN***

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

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

COMMITTEE:          Education Funding

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ANALYSIS

This bill authorizes school boards to extend free and reduced meal program eligibility for students with an individualized education program (IEP) that are already age 21 but attending school until the age of 22. The bill also directs the state to reimburse school boards from the general fund for free and reduced price meals for such eligible students.

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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Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.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 authorizing school districts to extend free and reduced lunch benefits for special education students.

*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; Special Education Students Over 21.  
8 Amend RSA 189:11-a by inserting after paragraph I the following new paragraph:

9 I-a. All school boards are authorized to extend eligibility for free and reduced price meals to  
10 eligible students until the completion of a student's individualized education plan (IEP) or until a  
11 student is the age of 22 years old, whichever occurs first in time. The state shall reimburse school  
12 boards through the general fund at the same reimbursement rate established by the U.S.  
13 Department of Agriculture for free and reduced price meals. For the purposes of this paragraph,  
14 "eligible student" shall mean a student that:

15 (a) Has an individualized education plan (IEP), as defined in RSA 186-C:2, III; and

16 (b) Is 21 years of age but continuing in their individualized educational program for an  
17 additional year up until reaching the age of 22.

18 3 Applicability. RSA 189:11-a as inserted in section 1 of this act shall apply to all eligible  
19 students enrolled beginning with the 2026-2027 school year.

20 4 Effective Date. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

**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.**

<b>Estimated State Impact</b>				
	<b>FY 2026</b>	<b>FY 2027</b>	<b>FY 2028</b>	<b>FY 2029</b>
<b>Revenue</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Revenue Fund(s)</i>	None			
<b>Expenditures*</b>	\$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			
<b>Appropriations*</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	None			

\*Expenditure = Cost of bill

\*Appropriation = Authorized funding to cover cost of bill

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