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Act No. 64 (H. 165). An act relating to school food programs and universal school meals

Subjects: Education; universal school meals; school food program

This act creates the universal meals supplement and amends the eligibility requirements for the local foods incentive grant program.

Sec. 1 of this act contains legislative findings related to universal meals programs. Through the creation of the universal meals supplement, Sec. 2 and 3 of this act provide for free breakfast and lunch under the federal school food programs for all public school students and students attending approved independent schools on public tuition. The universal meals supplement is an amount equal to the federal reimbursement rate for a free meal less the federal reimbursement rate for a paid meal. 16 V.S.A. § 1265 is repealed, removing the ability of a school district to seek an exemption from participation in the federal food programs. Approved independent schools are required to participate in the federal food programs only if they want to qualify for the universal meals supplement. School districts and approved independent schools are required to maximize access to federal funds in order to qualify for the universal meals supplement. The universal meals supplement is funded through an appropriation from the Education Fund.

Sec. 4 of this act expands eligibility for participation in the local foods incentive grant program under 16 V.S.A. § 1264a by adding approved independent schools that qualify for the universal meals supplement as entities eligible for participation in the grant program.

Effective Date: July 1, 2023