



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 30, 2023

TO: The Honorable Members of the Delaware General Assembly

FROM: Erik Warner, Vice Chairperson
GACEC

RE: House Bill No. 125 Free School Meals

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed **House Bill No. 125**, which proposes to amend §4137 of the Delaware Code, requiring all Delaware schools to offer students free breakfast and lunch every school day. Council **supports** the proposed amendment.

The amendment strikes through much of what was previously included in § 4137. It then titles the section "Free School Meals Program." The amendment then states that "[a]ll schools that participate in the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program must provide a breakfast meal and a lunch meal free of charge to any pupil who requests a meal without consideration of the pupil's eligibility for a federally free funded or reduced-price meal, with a maximum of 1 free meal for each meal service period." These meals must meet the meal pattern requirements outlined in the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program.

Because the U.S. Department of Agriculture waivers expired on June 30, 2022, Delaware schools participating in the USDA School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program were required to return to pre-pandemic policies as they related to free breakfast and lunch meals. This amendment would ensure that students continue to get free meals while at school. The amendment notes that "access to school meals should not cause stigma or stress for any student seeking an education, and "it is imperative that the State embrace these strategies to move forward the goal of ending child hunger."

“Feeding America” cites one in seven children in Delaware face hunger – 30,040 children. Removing the stress of mealtime in a school setting will help tackle this steep number. This amendment takes seriously the issue of child hunger and does not require a student to meet any eligibility requirements in order to receive two free meals at school every day. We thank the sponsors of this legislation and look forward to its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support with you. Please feel free to contact me or Pam Weir at the GACEC office should you have any questions on our comments.