

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 1342

As of March 4, 2021

Title: An act relating to eliminating lunch copays for students who qualify for reduced-price lunches.

Brief Description: Eliminating lunch copays for students who qualify for reduced-price lunches.

Sponsors: Representatives Berg, Gregerson, Berry, Wicks, Chopp, Valdez, Morgan, Sells, Fitzgibbon, Orwall, Santos, Ryu, Peterson, Rude, Maycumber, Shewmake, Stokesbary, Ormsby, Lovick, Stonier, Bergquist, Bateman, Lekanoff, Callan, Frame, Riccelli, Pollet and Harris-Talley.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/21, 95-1.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/10/21.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates lunch co-pays for students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth- grade who qualify for reduced-price lunches.
- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to allocate funding for this purpose.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: School breakfast and lunch programs are subsidized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the state, and student co-pays based on family income. In order for students to qualify for free meals, their family's income must be at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. Students whose families have income between 130 percent and 185 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. USDA

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requires a standard co-pay for reduced-price meals—\$0.30 for breakfast and \$0.40 for lunch.

For the period July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, 130 percent of the poverty level is \$34,060 for a family of four and 185 percent is \$48,470. In Washington, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction reported 402,028 students, or 36 percent of public school students, qualified for free meals and 77,126 students, or 7 percent of public school students, qualified for reduced-price meals in October 2019.

In the operating budget, the Legislature has appropriated state funds for child nutrition programs, which includes eliminating breakfast co-pays for eligible public school students and lunch co-pays for eligible public school students in kindergarten through third- grade.

Summary of Bill: Beginning in the 2021-22 school year, school districts with school lunch programs must eliminate lunch co-pays for students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth-grade who qualify for reduced-price lunches. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must allocate funding for this purpose.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.