

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2964

As of February 24, 2016

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: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Gregerson, Santos, Peterson, Rossetti, Kuderer, Stanford, Hudgins, Ormsby, Frame and Bergquist).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/16/16, 54-43.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/22/16.

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 families' income must be at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. Students whose families have an income between 130 percent and 185 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. For the period of July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016, 130 percent of the poverty level is \$31,525 for a family of four; 185 percent is \$44,863.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reports that in October 2014, 38.8 percent or 411,127 public school students were eligible for free lunch, and 6.9 percent or 72,623 were eligible for reduced-price lunch in Washington.

In the operating budget, the Legislature has appropriated state funds to Child Nutrition Services within OSPI to help feed low-income students, which includes eliminating reduced-price co-pays. USDA requires a standard co-pay for reduced-price meals - \$0.30 for breakfast and \$0.40 for lunch. Normally, school districts would collect this fee from households that participate in the child nutrition programs. However, in Washington, the State pays the reduced-price co-pay for breakfasts served to all eligible students. The State also pays the lunch co-pay for students in kindergarten through third grade. For fiscal year

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2015, the Legislature provided \$7.11 million for child nutrition programs of which \$2.1 million was spent on the elimination of reduced-price co-pays for breakfast and lunch.

Summary of Bill: To the extent funds are appropriated for this purpose, school districts with school lunch programs must begin to eliminate lunch co-pays for students in prekindergarten through twelfth grade who qualify for reduced-price lunches. Starting in the 2016-17 school year, lunch co-pays must be phased out beginning with schools with the highest poverty levels, defined as those schools with the highest percentages of students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch support in the prior school year. Lunch co-pays must be completely eliminated in the 2020-21 school year.

Lunch co-pay is defined as the amount a student who qualifies for a reduced-price lunch is charged for a reduced-priced lunch.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: School is a place where students have access to nutritious food. Since lunch co-pays are paid for students in kindergarten through third grade, it makes sense to include children in other grades. Eliminating lunch co-pays gets more meals to kids. The number of children qualifying for reduced-price meals has gone down because more children are qualifying for free meals.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Gregerson, Prime Sponsor; Claire Lane, Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.