
UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 411
Author: Pérez (D), et al.
Amended: 9/2/25 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 7-0, 4/2/25
AYES: Pérez, Ochoa Bogh, Cabaldon, Choi, Cortese, Gonzalez, Laird

SENATE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE: 5-0, 4/21/25
AYES: Arreguín, Ochoa Bogh, Becker, Limón, Pérez

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-0, 5/23/25
AYES: Caballero, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab
NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle

SENATE FLOOR: 38-0, 5/28/25
AYES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener
NO VOTE RECORDED: Limón, Reyes

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 9/8/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Stop Child Hunger Act of 2025

SOURCE: California Association of Food Banks
California State Council of Service Employees International Union
GRACE/End Child Poverty California

DIGEST: This bill requires the California Department of Education (CDE), subject to an appropriation, with support from the Department of Social Services (DSS), to develop a statewide application that is made available through a single

statewide website that enables families to submit federally required information for meal eligibility, as specified.

Assembly Amendments (1) condition the requirements of this bill on an appropriations; (2) applies the provisions of this bill to charter schools; (3) requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to make an electronic device available for families to use to access the statewide application, upon request; (4) strikes provisions related to alternative income verification forms; and, (5) extends the timeline by which the statewide application is to be available.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Requires local educational agencies (LEAs), beginning with the 2022-23 school year, to make available a nutritionally adequate breakfast and a nutritionally adequate lunch (that qualify for federal reimbursement) free of charge during each school day to any student who requests a meal without consideration of the student's eligibility for a federally funded free or reduced-price meal. (Education Code (EC) § 49501.5)
- 2) Requires CDE to work with DSS to maximize participation in the federal Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (Summer EBT) program. CDE is required to share all data determined by the departments to be necessary. (EC § 49506)
- 3) Requires LEAs to make paper applications for free or reduced-price meals available to students at all times during each regular school day, and are authorized to also make an application electronically available online, as specified. Online applications must comply with the following requirements, among other things:
 - a) Require completion of only those questions that are necessary for determining eligibility.
 - b) Comply with specified privacy rights and disclosure protections.
 - c) Include links to all of the following:
 - i) The online application to CalFresh.

- ii) The online single state application for health care.
- iii) The Department of Public Health's web page entitled "About WIC and How to Apply," or another web page that connects families to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.
- iv) The website of a summer lunch program authorized to participate within the city or school district. (EC § 49557)

This bill:

- 1) Requires CDE, subject to an appropriation, with support from DSS, to develop, and provide families with, a statewide application that is made available through a single statewide website that enables families to submit federally required information.
- 2) Requires the statewide application to adhere to all of the following:
 - a) Is made available with sufficient time for families to apply for summer of 2028 benefits.
 - b) Has the ability to, upon completion of the application, be routed to the applicant family's LEA to determine Summer EBT eligibility.
 - c) Meets the requirements for CDE's new student benefit form that is in an alternative electronic format that meets the requirements and purposes of the Local Control Funding Formula, and also the federal requirements to determine eligibility for the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Summer EBT Program (SUN Bucks).
 - d) Is limited, with regard to information requested, to minimum requirements under federal law and guidance.
 - e) Is translated with accessible language into at least all threshold languages that are required for the CalFresh program.
- 3) Requires LEAs to make an electronic device available for families to use to access the statewide application, upon request.

- 4) Modifies the existing requirement that LEAs make paper applications for free- or reduced-price meals available to students at all times during each regular school day to specify this requirement is only if required by federal law and guidance.
- 5) Expands the links required to be included in an online application for free- or reduced-price meals to also include a link to the website providing information about the federal Summer EBT program.
- 6) Clarifies that the plan LEAs must formulate to ensure students eligible for free- or reduced-price meals are not treated differently from other children, are only for schools that do not serve meals universally to all students.
- 7) Prohibits the statewide application developed pursuant to this bill from being subject to the Project Approval Lifecycle of the Department of Technology.
- 8) Applies the provisions of this bill to charter schools.

Comments

School meal applications and forms. Student eligibility for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast program is determined based on a family's income, as reported by families via the National School Lunch Program meal application, and verified by the LEA. LEAs are reimbursed with federal and state funds for meals served to eligible students at either the Free, Reduced-Price or Paid category. For schools operating the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs under standard meal counting and claiming, the National School Lunch Program application can also be used to identify low-income students for purposes of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Federal regulations prohibit schools operating the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs under a federal provision (see next below) from collecting meal applications. These schools can use the Alternative Income Form for LCFF purposes. The Alternative Income Form cannot be used for determining eligibility for the National School Lunch or School Breakfast programs or for SUN Bucks. While state law now requires LEAs to offer two meals per day free of charge to all students, income eligibility information is still needed for the purposes described above.

This bill requires LEAs, to the extent allowed by federal law and guidance, to provide alternative income verification forms instead of the application for free- or reduced-price meals.

The federal SUN Bucks program requires that each student be individually identified for eligibility (even while LEAs may be approved to provide meals to all students under the federal Community Eligibility Provision or Provision 2, which allow schools with a high percentage of low-income students to serve all students at that schoolsite free of charge). Therefore, the information required for the National School Lunch Program and for SUN Bucks is not aligned.

Due to the need for updated applications to accommodate the information required to determine eligibility for SUN Bucks, SB 153 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 38, Statutes of 2024) required CDE to develop a student benefit form in an alternative electronic format that meets the requirements and purposes of the LCFF, and also the federal requirements to determine eligibility for the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Summer EBT Program (SUN Bucks). CDE recently released the new Universal Benefits Application template for these purposes. Federal regulations require states to make a Summer EBT application available to households whose children are enrolled in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast programs and who do not already have an individual eligibility determination; however, federal regulations do not require the application to be an interactive web-based tool.

Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, schools participating in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program that are approved to operate a federal provision, such as the Community Eligibility Provision or Provision 2, must collect Universal Benefits Applications for SUN Bucks eligibility on an annual basis. This will ensure that the estimated 1.8 million students who attend schools serving meals to all students under the federal Community Eligibility Provision or Provision 2 can apply for SUN Bucks eligibility.

The author notes that, while the new Universal Benefits Application is an important step, it is a static PDF that does not allow families to complete and submit it online. This bill requires CDE to develop a statewide application that is made available through a single statewide website that enables families to submit federally required information.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, this bill would impose the following costs:

- 1) One-time General Fund costs of approximately \$3.2 million in the first year of implementation, and \$2.8 million ongoing, for the CDE to acquire an additional 12 staff and information technology resources necessary to develop and maintain the data system to collect income eligibility applications from families.
- 2) Minor and absorbable workload for the CDSS to support the CDE in developing the application website.

SUPPORT: (Verified 9/8/25)

California Association of Food Banks (co-source)
California State Council of Service Employees International Union (co-source)
GRACE/End Child Poverty California (co-source)
Alameda County Community Food Bank
Alchemist CDC
American Academy of Pediatrics, California
Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement
Back to the Start
California Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
California Catholic Conference
California Food and Farming Network
California Immigrant Policy Center
California State PTA
California Teachers Association
California WIC Association
Ceres Community Project
CFT- A Union of Educators & Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO
CleanEarth4Kids.org
Community Action Partnership of Orange County
Community Foodbank of San Benito
Courage California
Early Matters Fresno
Farm2people
Feeding San Diego
Food Access LA
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano
Food for People, the Food Bank for Humboldt County
Food in Need of Distribution Food Bank
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
Fullwell

GLIDE

Grace Institute - End Child Poverty in CA
 Hunger Action Los Angeles
 Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
 Los Angeles Community Action Network
 Los Angeles Food Policy Council
 Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
 Marin Food Policy Council
 Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger
 National Council of Jewish Women-California
 NextGen California
 Nourish California
 Parent Voices California
 Pesticide Action Network North America
 Roots of Change
 Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services
 Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
 Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz County
 Second Harvest of Silicon Valley
 Share Our Strength
 Sierra Harvest
 Western Center on Law & Poverty
 What We All Deserve

OPPOSITION: (Verified 9/8/25)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 9/8/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías,
 Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon,
 Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary,
 Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark
 González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson,
 Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Ortega,
 Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos,
 Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio,
 Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa,
 Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Nguyen

Prepared by: Lynn Lorber / ED. / (916) 651-4105
9/8/25 19:49:47

**** **END** ****