
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair
2015 - 2016 Regular

Bill No: AB 292
Author: Santiago
Version: June 2, 2015
Urgency: No
Consultant: Lynn Lorber
Hearing Date: July 8, 2015
Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Pupil nutrition: free or reduced-price meals: adequate time to eat

SUMMARY

This bill requires school districts to ensure that each of their schools provide students adequate time to eat after being served a meal, and requires schools that do not provide students with adequate time to eat to develop a plan to increase students' time to eat lunch.

BACKGROUND

Current law requires each school district or county superintendent of schools serving kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, to provide for each needy student one nutritionally adequate free or reduced-price meal during each schoolday. (Education Code § 49550)

ANALYSIS

This bill requires school districts to ensure that schools provide students adequate time to eat after being served. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires school districts to ensure that each of their schools in their respective jurisdictions makes available to its students adequate time to eat after being served lunch.
- 2) States that the California Department of Education specifies that adequate time to eat lunch is 20 minutes after being served.
- 3) Requires a school, upon annual review of its bell schedule and if the school determines that it is not providing students with adequate time to eat, to identify and develop a plan, in consultation with the school district, to implement ways to increase students' time to eat lunch.
- 4) Authorizes the appropriate school food authority, to the extent that funds are available, to use federally or state-regulated nonprofit school food service cafeteria accounts to defray any allowable costs from that funding source.
- 5) States legislative findings and declarations relative to nutritional standards, the benefits of healthy eating, and the need for adequate time to eat.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “Lunch periods provide a much-needed time for students to take a break and refuel their bodies. For many low-income students, school lunch may be the most nutritious meal of the day. In recent years, numerous legislative actions, both state and federal, have improved the nutritional quality of school meals. Unfortunately, students often miss out on the full benefits of school lunch because they do not have adequate time to eat.”
- 2) ***Guidance and resources.*** This bill states that the California Department of Education (CDE) specifies that the adequate time to eat lunch is 20 minutes after being served. The Superintendent of Public Instruction issued a letter to schools in January 2013, recommending that each student has at least 10 minutes for breakfast and at least 20 minutes for lunch after being served. This letter states that research indicates inadequate time to eat discourages students from buying and eating complete lunches. The letter further states that waiting in line is the most commonly reported factor contributing to student dissatisfaction with lunches.

A 2013 survey conducted by CDE of over 1,000 school principals found that just under 25% of elementary schools and 8% of middle/high schools had policies at the school or district level specifying an amount of time that students have to eat. When asked to estimate the amount of time the last student in line has to eat during the lunch period, only 28% of elementary principals and just under 45% of middle/high school principals reported that students were provided at least 20 minutes to eat.

The CDE’s website includes a list of best practices, examples of ways to determine if a school provides adequate time to eat, examples of how to include adequate time to eat in school wellness policies, and information about the Smarter Lunchroom Movement workshops, Recess Before Lunch, and other resources.

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/timetoeat.asp#smarter>

- 3) ***Existing local policy.*** In 1990, the governing board of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) passed a resolution adopting the Cafeteria Reform Motion, which set goals of increasing student meal participation. The LAUSD established guidelines which ensure the last child in the food line be given no less than 20 minutes of seat time to eat their meal at lunch, and 10 minutes of seat time for breakfast. In 2005, LAUSD passed another resolution reaffirming the goals of providing at least 20 minutes of seat time to eat lunch. On December 11, 2012, the LAUSD board of education approved yet another resolution reaffirming the goals for providing adequate time to eat.
- 4) ***Fiscal impact.*** According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, this bill would impose unknown General Fund/Proposition 98 state mandated costs, potentially in excess of \$1 million. Costs claims could include staff time to develop and implement a plan as well as monitoring and data collection to ensure each school is providing adequate time to eat lunch. Depending on the plan, districts may need to purchase equipment and make system upgrades; provide additional points of service or

expand the school day to meet an adequate time goal. Actual costs will depend on the size and types of claims districts submit to the Commission on State Mandates to implement this bill.

- 5) ***Prior legislation.*** AB 2449 (Bocanegra, 2014) was nearly identical to this bill and was held by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SUPPORT

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Heart Association
American Stroke Association
California Black Health Network
California Catholic Conference of Bishops
California Food Policy Advocates
California School Employees Association
California State PTA
Children Now
Los Angeles Unified School District
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter

OPPOSITION

None received.

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