

H.B. 2186

(school meals; unpaid fees)

Healthy, Hunger-Free Students

WHAT IS HB 2186?

HB 2186 outlines how schools and families should manage unpaid student meal debt in a way that ensures students receive nutritious meals without stigmatization while schools remain able to collect unpaid debt.

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM (NSLP)?

A federal program that helps schools provide nutritious meals at low or no cost to children. During the 2017–18 academic year, more than 1 million students in Arizona participated in NSLP, and nearly 600,000 low-income students received free or reduced-price meals.¹

HOW IS UNPAID STUDENT MEAL DEBT MANAGED?

In 2017, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) required all schools participating in NSLP to issue guidelines on how to manage unpaid student meal debt. These guidelines are meant to define how a student who does not have sufficient funds to pay for a meal can *and cannot* be treated and how schools can *and cannot* communicate with families to collect a debt, among other issues. They are required to be accessible to anyone.

Students with insufficient meal funds may be served a nutritionally comparable, reimbursable alternative meal. Applications for free and reduced-price meals are distributed to parents/guardians of all enrolled students, including those that transfer in mid-year. Unpaid meal debt guidelines must be accessible, both online and available upon request.

WHAT DO UNPAID STUDENT MEAL DEBT GUIDELINES PROHIBIT?

Students with insufficient meal funds cannot be forced to do chores to “earn” a meal, use a separate lunch line, or have their meal thrown in the garbage. Students cannot have their hands stamped or written on or otherwise be used as a tool to notify parents/guardians about the existing meal debt.

ARE CURRENT GUIDELINES SUFFICIENT?

No. The guidelines are inconsistently applied and enforced, so families and food service departments are left confused. This can lead to unintended stigmatization.

¹ Arizona Department of Education. [National School Lunch Program Free/Reduced-Price Percentage Report \(School Year 2017–18\)](#). April 27, 2018.

² Arizona Department of Education. [Unpaid Meal Charge Policy Guidelines for School Year 2017–18](#). Memorandum 14-2017. June 28, 2017.

About AAFB

Association of Arizona Food Banks

AAFB is a nonprofit organization dedicated to a hunger-free Arizona. Our mission is to develop solutions to end hunger through food banking, public policy, and innovation. We support our members and the statewide emergency food network with transportation and food distribution; lead efforts to improve childhood nutrition; engage in anti-hunger advocacy; and collaborate with partners on healthy initiatives.



working with food banks

Collectively, AAFB's five food bank members and their 1,000 supporting partners distributed 185 million pounds of food to Arizonans in need last year.



fresh produce initiative

Fresh fruits and vegetables made up 47 percent of the food our members distributed in 2017–2018, much of it donated or purchased from Arizona and surrounding communities. Over the past two years, we have increased the volume of fresh produce we distribute by nearly 70 percent. This initiative also reduces food waste by diverting healthy produce from landfills.



child & youth outreach

We work with schools and food service departments statewide to make school meals, summer meals, and after-school snacks more accessible and nutritious.



advocating to end hunger

We work with elected officials at the state and federal levels to raise awareness about the impact of legislation on hungry people and to offer solutions. We also partner with the public, nonprofit, and private sectors to end hunger.