



H.B. No. 6350 AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2015,
AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO REVENUE.

Appropriations Committee

February 21, 2013

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan and I am the executive director of End Hunger Connecticut!, a statewide anti-hunger and food security organization. I am here tonight to speak in favor of continued funding for the School Breakfast Program and against the move of the Healthy Food Certification to the Community Investment Account, as proposed in the Governor's budget.

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is administered federally by the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). At the state level it is administered by the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) and is operated by school food service authorities in local schools. Schools that choose to run the program are reimbursed by the federal government for meals served to students.

The Governor, this legislature and the State Department of Education have been champions of the School Breakfast Program in Connecticut and because of this commitment we have seen very large increases in participation. While Connecticut continues to hold the dubious distinction of being last in the nation for the percentage of schools offering breakfast, this may be the year we lose that title!

Due to added state support, we have seen growth in the number of schools participating to 700 which is 64.6% of schools participating in the National School Lunch Program where the 2010-2011 school year only 60.5% participated.

Just yesterday the 51st school came onboard to serve breakfast this year! This increases our school participation to 751 schools in Connecticut. Last year only 29 new schools came on. We attribute this success to new state legislation that expanded the definition of severe need schools eligible for additional funding to 20% free/reduced lunch participation; the 2012 School Breakfast Summit; breakfast outreach, marketing and the Governor's commitment to increasing participation; and the state grant funds for in-classroom breakfast grants and expansion.

This past school year, 44% of our low-income children participated in the School Breakfast Program, which translates into more than 132,000 low-income children start their day with a healthy brain starting meal. Evidence consistency points to the fact that breakfast is a fundamental part of a healthy diet for any children, but even more so for low income children whose nutritional status can be compromised. Additionally, offering a school breakfast is also linked to lower levels of absenteeism and visits to the nurse as well as higher levels of academic performance.

Connecticut offers a small, per breakfast reimbursement depending on available funds, and grants to schools offering SBP with 20% of more of their students participating in free or reduced-price lunch in the second prior year. Often, depending on the level of participation in the program, the federal reimbursement often does not provide enough for school to cover their costs; this extra funding

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allows them to do so and thereby encourage schools with higher need and low-income students to offer school breakfast.

As more schools participate with the program and more children eat breakfast at school there is a need for additional funding. This budget takes that into account.

The Healthy Food Certification is landmark legislation and is the prototype for federal legislation to be implemented next school year. Under section 10-215f the governing authority for all public schools participating in the National School Lunch Program are required to certify annually to the CT State Department of Education whether they will follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards for all foods sold to students separately from USDA Child Nutrition Programs. All foods sold, from all sources including the school store, vending machines, school cafeterias, fundraising activities on school premises and any other sources of food sales must comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards. Districts that do implement the standards receive 10 cents per lunch, based on the total number of reimbursable lunches (paid, free and reduced) served in the district in the prior school year.

With this budget there is a change in the funding stream for the Healthy Food Certification. We are opposed to this change. The Healthy Food Certification was zeroed out in the general fund and moved to the "community investment account". The legislation requires a withdrawal of \$1,000,000 in each quarter. In October the account had an aggregate \$20,727,365 in it. A \$4,000,000 annual withdrawal would account for a fifth of its total yearly income.

I sit on the steering committee of the Working Lands Alliance, one of the coalition partners that advocated for the passage of the community investment account. The CIA, as it is known, was conceived as a way to protect our Connecticut heritage. Money is divided between agricultural viability and preservation, open space grants, historic preservation and affordable housing. Our state heritage was deemed a priority by the legislature and the CIA is the tool to fund the restoration and protection of lands, barns and a way of life. These programs are to spur on economic development. The Healthy Food Certification does not fit in this picture.

Taking \$4,000,000 from the account would impact these programs in significant ways. As the legislation is written there would be two programs whose funding would be removed from the top of the account and the other four programs would each receive twenty-five percent of the remainder. If the fund fluctuates the Healthy Food Certification can impact the remaining groups by decreasing the pool of available funds.

The state must continue to make its commitment to our children through the ongoing and transparent funding of the Healthy Food Certification through the General Fund. The current system has been working well, proved by the increase in schools and children participating in the program. Teaching our children to eat well, and to appreciate healthier and more nutritious foods is one aspect to the program. The other is that well and properly fed children are better prepared to learn in school.

In the enabling legislation there is a provision to change the reimbursement mechanism as well. The legislation repeals the language authorizing a per meal reimbursement and substitutes language that the amount of grants payable shall be reduced proportionally if the total grant is more than the appropriated amount. We are opposed to this language.

The per meal reimbursement is what makes the program effective. This is different than the way

school meals, not part of the Healthy Food Certification, are funded by the state. Connecticut is one of the few states in the nation that pays for meals out of a block of funds. In 2006, when the Healthy Food Certification was passed, there had not been an increase in the state funding for lunches in 26 years. What had been 10 cents per meal reimbursement became 4.5 cents per meal. As more children used the program the funding stream remained the same yet the reimbursement was less. As a way to encourage school districts to participate in the Healthy Food Certification the legislation was written to include an additional 10 cents for each meal sold.

New federal meal guidelines consisting of more whole grains, fruits and vegetables will go into effect this school year. School food service directors in Connecticut anticipate that the implementation of the guidelines will cost them an additional 30 cents in food cost per meal served. That will be a loss for them, and for their districts. A separate law also went into effect forcing many districts to raise prices on their meals for those children who are not in the free or reduced price category. It would be difficult to increase meal prices again. The USDA does fund some of the cost of the meals, and does so on a sliding scale for free, reduced and full price meals, but it is not enough to ensure that healthy more nutritious meals are served. For state reimbursement, school food service directors are unable to anticipate what the reimbursement will be as it is dependent on the amount appropriated by the State Department of Education as opposed to the number of meals served. With the Healthy Food Certification there is that one known quantity.

If the quality of school meals deteriorates fewer children will eat them. This will effect the reimbursement by the USDA to Connecticut as well as decrease the nutritional intake of children who eat their meals as part of the school meals program. Children who eat meals at school have fewer weight issues than those who do not participate in at least one meal at school and the federally funded meals have complete food components to ensure all the food groups are ingested.

I have attached a list of schools that are participating in the Healthy School Certification program. There are currently 140 school districts participating, or about 74% of the school districts. Ninety-nine percent of the school districts that implemented the program in the last school year did so again this year. It is a popular program and one that should be fully funded as intended through the general fund, where the impact of the program can be seen on a yearly basis through the amount of funding it uses.

Thank you.

Handout can be accessed here:

http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/deps/student/nutritioned/hfc_data/certifyingdistricts12.pdf

Connecticut School Districts Implementing Healthy Food Certification

2012-13 School Year

During the 2012-13 school year, the following 140 school districts and schools elected to implement healthy food certification (HFC) under section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes. This represents 74 percent of the 190 school districts and schools eligible for HFC in 2012-13. * New districts for 2012-13 are indicated in bold. Schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program through an interschool agreement with another school district have the option of implementing HFC if the other school district has certified. If a school district is not listed, either it has chosen not to implement HFC or is ineligible for HFC. For more information, see the HFC map at http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/deps/student/nutritioned/hfc_data/hfc_map.pdf.

School Districts

- Andover Elementary School** (Coventry Public Schools)
- Ansonia Public Schools
- Ashford Public Schools
- Barkhamsted Public Schools
- Bethany Public Schools
- Bethel Public Schools
- Bloomfield Public Schools
- Branford Public Schools
- Bridgeport Public Schools
- Bristol Public Schools
- Brookfield Public Schools
- Brooklyn Public Schools
- Canterbury Public Schools
- Canton Public Schools
- Chaplin Elementary School
- Cheshire Public Schools
- Chester Public Schools
- Clinton Public Schools
- Colchester Public Schools
- Colebrook Public Schools
- Columbia Public Schools
- Coventry Public Schools
- Danbury Public Schools
- Deep River Public Schools
- Derby Public Schools
- East Hartford Public Schools
- East Haven Public Schools
- Ellington Public Schools
- Essex Public Schools
- Fairfield Public Schools
- Franklin Public Schools
- Glastonbury Public Schools
- Groton Public Schools
- Guilford Public Schools
- Hampton Public Schools
- Hartford Public Schools
- Hebron Public Schools
- **Killingly Public Schools**
- Lebanon Public Schools
- Ledyard Public Schools
- Lisbon Public Schools
- Litchfield Public Schools** (Education Connection)
- Manchester Public Schools
- Mansfield Public Schools
- Marlborough Public Schools
- Meriden Public Schools
- Middletown Public Schools
- Monroe Public Schools

- Montville Public Schools
- New Britain Public Schools
- New Fairfield Public Schools
- New Hartford Public Schools
- New Haven Public Schools
- New London Public Schools
- New Milford Public Schools
- Newington Public Schools
- Norfolk Public Schools
- North Canaan Public Schools
- North Haven Public Schools
- North Stonington Public Schools
- Norwalk Public Schools
- Norwich Public Schools
- Old Saybrook Public Schools
- Orange Public Schools
- Oxford Public Schools
- Plainfield Public Schools
- Plainville Public Schools
- Plymouth Public Schools
- Pomfret Public Schools
- Portland Public Schools
- Preston Public Schools
- Putnam Public Schools
- Rocky Hill Public Schools
- Salem Public Schools
- Salisbury Public Schools
- Scotland Public Schools
- Seymour Public Schools
- Simsbury Public Schools
- South Windsor Public Schools
- Sprague Public Schools
- Stafford Public Schools
- Sterling Public Schools
- Stonington Public Schools
- **Stratford Public Schools**
- Thomaston Public Schools
- Thompson Public Schools
- Tolland Public Schools
- Vernon Public Schools
- Voluntown Public Schools
- Waterbury Public Schools
- Waterford Public Schools
- Watertown Public Schools
- Westbrook Public Schools
- West Hartford Public Schools
- West Haven Public Schools
- Wethersfield Public Schools

- Willington Public Schools
- Winchester Public Schools
- Windham Public Schools
- Windsor Public Schools
- Windsor Locks Public Schools
- Wolcott Public Schools
- Woodbridge Public Schools
- Woodstock Public Schools
- Regional School District 4: Chester, Deep River, Essex
- Regional School District 9: Easton, Redding
- **Regional School District 11: Chaplin, Hampton, Scotland**
- Regional School District 13: Durham, Middlefield
- Regional School District 16: Beacon Falls, Prospect
- Regional School District 18: Lyme, Old Lyme

Magnets, Charters and Academies

- Academy of Aerospace & Engineering, Bloomfield (Bloomfield)**
- Achievement First, Bridgeport
- **Achievement First, Hartford (Hartford Public Schools)**
- Amistad Academy, New Haven
- Area Cooperative Education Services (ACES), North Haven
- ACES Thomas Edison Middle Magnet, Meriden** (Meriden Public Schools)
- Common Ground Charter High School, New Haven
- Cooperative Educational Services (CES), Trumbull** (Bridgeport Public Schools)
- CES Six to Six Magnet, Bridgeport** (Bridgeport Public Schools)
- CES Special Education Center, Trumbull** (Bridgeport Public Schools)
- Capitol Regional Education Center (CREC), Hartford
- CREC East Hartford-Glastonbury Elementary Magnet, East Hartford** (Glastonbury Public Schools)
- **CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts**

Elementary Magnet School, Bloomfield** (Bloomfield Public Schools)

- CREC Learning Corridor Montessori Magnet** (Hartford Public Schools)
- CREC Metropolitan Learning Center, Bloomfield** (Windsor Public Schools)
- CREC Medical Professions and Teachers Preparation Academy, Windsor** (Windsor Public Schools)
- **CREC Museum Academy, Bloomfield** (Bloomfield Public Schools)**
- CREC Two Rivers Magnet, East Hartford** (East Hartford Public Schools)
- Elm City College Preparatory, New Haven
- Jumoke Academy Charter, Hartford** (Hartford Public Schools)
- LEARN Connecticut River Academy, East Hartford (East Hartford Public Schools)**
- LEARN Dual Language Arts Academy, Waterford (New London Public Schools)**
- LEARN The Friendship Magnet School, Waterford** (Waterford Public Schools)
- Marine Science Magnet School (Groton)**
- New Beginnings Family Academy Charter School, Bridgeport
- Regional Magnet School (New London)**
- Side By Side Community Charter School, Norwalk** (Norwalk Public Schools)
- **Stamford Academy, Stamford**
- The Bridge Academy Charter School, Bridgeport
- **Three Rivers Middle College Magnet High School, Norwich (New London Public Schools)****

* HFC eligibility includes all public school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), including regional educational service centers, the Connecticut Technical High School System, charter schools, interdistrict magnet schools and endowed academies.

** Designates a school that participates in HFC through an interschool agreement with the district indicated in parentheses.

Healthy Food Certification 2012-13, Continued

Changes in Participating Districts

Eight new districts signed up to implement HFC for 2012-13, including:

- Killingly Public Schools
- Stratford Public Schools
- Regional School District 11: Chaplin, Hampton, Scotland
- Achievement First, Hartford (Hartford Public Schools)
- CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Elementary Magnet School, Bloomfield** (Bloomfield Public Schools)
- CREC Museum Academy, Bloomfield** (Bloomfield Public Schools)
- Stamford Academy, Stamford
- Three Rivers Middle College Magnet High School, Norwich (New London Public Schools)**

** Designates a school that participates in HFC through an interschool agreement with the district indicated in parentheses.

Ninety-nine percent of the school districts that implemented HFC in 2011-12 recertified for the 2012-13 school year. One school did not recertify (Odyssey School under an interschool agreement with East Hartford Public Schools).

Changes in Statewide HFC Eligibility and Participation

As indicated in Figure 1, from 2011-12 to 2012-13, the number of school districts eligible for HFC increased by two districts (1 percent) while the overall number of districts choosing to participate in HFC increased by seven districts (5.3 percent). During the 2011-12 school year, 70.7 percent of eligible school districts participated in HFC. This figure increased to 73.7 percent for the 2012-13 school year, a change of 4.2 percent (see Figure 2). HFC participation has increased by 45.1 percent overall from the first year (2006-07) to 2012-13 (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 1. Change in Eligible versus Participating Districts from 2011-12 to 2012-13

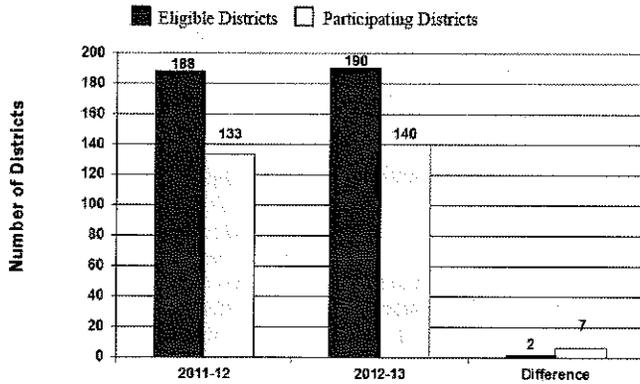


Figure 2. Change in Healthy Food Certification Participation from 2011-12 to 2012-13

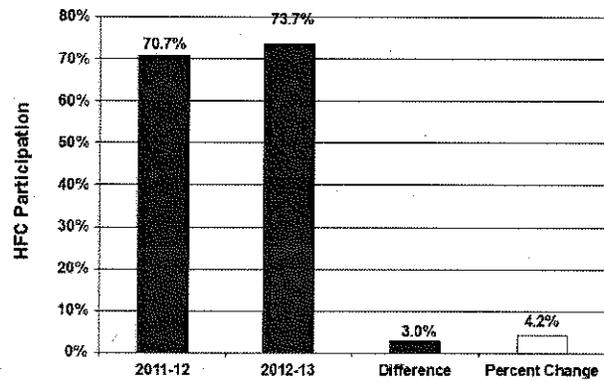


Figure 3. Healthy Food Certification Participation to Date

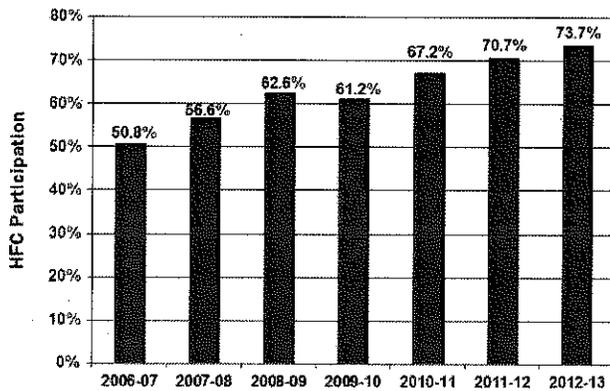
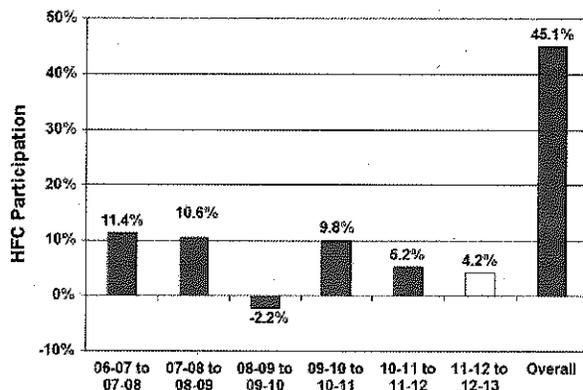


Figure 4. Percent Increase in Healthy Food Certification to Date



Information regarding Connecticut's healthy food certification and state statutes for school food and beverages can be found at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322416>. For more information, contact Susan S. Fiore, M.S., R.D., Nutrition Education Coordinator, Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Health and Nutrition Services and Child/Family/School Partnerships, 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457, 860-807-2075, susan.fiore@ct.gov.

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