



**State Representatives
Sarah LaTourette and Scott Lipps**

House Bill 734
Sponsor Testimony
November 27, 2018

Chairman Brenner, Vice-Chair Slaby, Ranking Member Fedor, and distinguished members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 734.

More than 497,000 students, based on FY 2017 USDA data, across the state qualify for meal assistance at school but do not access their school breakfast program because of barriers to the program. School breakfast is critical to ensure that students have the basic nutrition they need and are ready to learn at the start of every day.

Research shows a clear link between students eating breakfast and student performance. Specifically:

- skipping breakfast and experiencing hunger can impair a child's ability to learn;
- eating breakfast, including at school, helps improve student academic performance and behavior;
- school breakfast decreases the risk of food insecurity; and
- school breakfast can improve children's dietary intake and protect against obesity and other negative health outcomes.

House Bill 734 requires high poverty schools to develop a plan to achieve a 70% participation rate of free or reduced-price students eating breakfast as compared to free and reduced students eating lunch if they are not already meeting this national benchmark.

Based on current data, by the end of year one after the bill's passage, the legislation would require those schools with at least 70% of the enrolled students qualifying for

free or reduced meals to achieve a 70% breakfast participation rate which would include an additional 229 schools or 9,789 students. By the end of year 2, the legislation would further require that schools with at least 60% of the enrolled students qualifying for free or reduced meals, to develop a plan to achieve a 70% participation rate which would include a total of 474 schools or 22,062 students. By the end of year 3 the legislation would require that schools with at least 50% of the enrolled students qualifying for free or reduced meals, develop a plan to achieve a 70% participation rate which would then include a total of 832 schools or 42,838 students.

The legislation would also require that the Ohio Department of Education publish participation data online and submit an annual report to the General Assembly that details the implementation and effectiveness of the program including number of children and participation rates by school building and type of breakfast model utilized by each school.

As House Bill 734 does not require a specific breakfast model to be used, schools may employ a variety of strategies to boost the number of students participating in the breakfast program. Just as each school is unique, so will each plan that schools implement as part of their personalized breakfast program. For a program to be successful, there must be buy-in from the administrators, teachers, staff, parents and students, thus we felt it was important not to focus on mandating a particular delivery mechanism.

Chairman Brenner and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing us to testify on House Bill 734. We are happy to respond to any questions you may have at this time.