



**SENATOR  
JOE SCHIAVONI**  
33<sup>RD</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

Senate Education Committee  
Sponsor Testimony-Senate Bill 191  
November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Chairman Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 191. This legislation would create the Breakfast After the Bell program, which would require schools with high ratios of low-income students to provide breakfast during or after first period to all students.

Under this bill schools would be required to provide a Breakfast After the Bell program if more than seventy percent of students in the previous school year qualified for free or reduced-price meals. Schools can be exempt from this program if the governing body of the school concludes that the school is unable to afford to maintain the program. However, federal reimbursement is available through the federal School Breakfast program, which recently announced maximum reimbursement rates.

We cannot underestimate the importance of making sure Ohio's students are ready and prepared to learn. The American Diabetes Association has said that rates of food insecurity have been increasing throughout the country since 1999, and that those experiencing this insecurity often depend more on foods that are less nutritious and calorie-dense. Students take in up to half of their calories at school, so it is imperative to make sure that we are looking out for the health and wellbeing of our students. Additionally, Research from the CDC shows that health behaviors of students, such as a healthy diet, are linked to academic achievement and that inadequate consumption of various nutrients coincide with lower grades and high rates of absenteeism and tardiness.

More students will be able to utilize the Breakfast After the Bell program since it would take place immediately after the school day begins. Increased participation in this program will help to reduce any social stigma surrounding the option. This bill can make a big difference in reducing childhood hunger and improving education outcomes, at no additional cost to the State.

According to the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) 2015 Elementary school report, schools which have implemented a Breakfast After the Bell program have seen the following progress:

- Improved student attentiveness (46%)
- Fewer occurrences of tardiness (32%) and absenteeism (21%)
- Fewer visits to the school nurse (21%)
- Fewer disciplinary referrals (18%)
- Improved reading and math test scores (9%)

Ten other states have enacted similar laws and Massachusetts has pending legislation. I urge you to join me in supporting the educational and physical wellbeing of Ohio's students.