

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

An Act To Support School Nutrition

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 20-A MRS §6602, sub-§12, as enacted by PL 2001, c. 447, §1, is amended to read:

12. Local Produce Fund. The Local Produce Fund is established within the ~~Department of Education~~ department. The fund is authorized to receive revenue from public and private sources. The fund must be held separate and apart from all other money, funds and accounts. Any balance remaining in the fund at the end of the fiscal year must be carried forward to the next fiscal year. The fund must be used to match \$1 for every \$3 a school administrative unit pays for produce or minimally processed foods purchased directly from a farmer or, farmers' cooperative or local food hub in the State, to a maximum state contribution of \$1,000 or \$2,000 if funding is received and the school administrative unit sends a food service employee to local foods training administered by the department under subsection 13. At the end of the fiscal year, the school administrative unit may provide the department with receipts documenting purchases pursuant to this subsection during that year. For purposes of this subsection, "minimally processed" means only the washing, cleaning, trimming, drying, sorting and packaging of food items or a combination of those activities. Reimbursement or partial reimbursement to school administrative units may only be made up to the amount available in the fund. Failure to reimburse does not constitute an obligation on behalf of the State to a school administrative unit. The department shall apply for federal grant funding to provide state contributions in excess of \$1,000 pursuant to this subsection if applicable grant funding is available. The department may accept grant funding from hospitals and other sources to provide state contributions in excess of \$1,000 pursuant to this subsection.

Sec. 2. 20-A MRS §6602, sub-§§13 to 15 are enacted to read:

13. Local foods training. The department shall administer a program to encourage and expand the use of local foods in school food service programs. As used in this subsection, unless the context otherwise indicates, "local food" means food produced or harvested by a Maine food producer as defined by Title 7, section 212, subsection 2. The program must:

A. Provide competitive grants for a training program to be conducted in up to 6 regions to provide training throughout the State without cost for local school food service programs to encourage and expand the use of local foods in school food service programs. The training program must emphasize practical training for food preparers, including creative and effective cooking skills using local fresh foods and local food procurement skills. The training program must also inform participants about practical supply chain solutions, including local food hubs and cooperatives within and across each region of the State;

B. Foster collaboration between school food service programs throughout the State;

C. Facilitate and encourage the use of local food hubs; and

D. Provide guidance to schools in the use of local food products and the nutritional attributes of local foods and provide strategies for encouraging maximum knowledge and acceptance of the nutritional value of locally produced food by students and communities.

The department shall apply for federal grant funding to implement this subsection. The department may implement this subsection only if the department receives funding covering the costs of the program under this subsection.

14. Food service program personnel; position description. The department shall develop and post a position description for school food service program personnel on its publicly accessible website. The position description must meet the federal guidelines established under the Nutrition Education and Training Program and Team Nutrition initiative of the National School Lunch Program under 7 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 210.

15. Food service recognition. The department shall provide for the development of an annual competitive skill-oriented school food service recognition based on criteria developed by the department emphasizing creative and effective use of local food products to attract students to eat healthier meals and snacks and promoting community interest in good nutrition and other factors determined by the department.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Department of Education to develop and support local food training programs for public school food service personnel and facilitate the use of local food hubs to expand the use of local foods in schools. It increases the limit on the amount that the State matches for the acquisition of local food by a school administrative unit if the unit sends a food service employee for training in the acquisition and use of local foods. It directs the department to develop and post a position description for school food service program personnel on its publicly accessible website and to develop an annual competitive skill-oriented school food service recognition emphasizing creative and effective use of local foods. It directs the Department of Education to apply for federal grant funding for the implementation of the local foods training program and the increased state contribution for the Local Produce Fund and it makes implementation contingent on receipt of funding. It also allows the department to accept grant funding from hospitals and other sources.