



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

REPRESENTATIVE MAXINE DIBERT

House District 31- Downtown Fairbanks

Session Contact
State Capitol, Room 126
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
(907) 465-2138

Interim Contact
1292 Sadler Way, Ste. 306
Fairbanks, AK 99701
(907) 451-4347

Chair Tribal Affairs Committee
Co-Chair House Resources Committee
House Education Committee
Joint Armed Services Committee

House Bill 12

Sponsor Statement

"An Act relating to free breakfast and lunch in public schools."

House Bill 12 directs the Department of Education (DEED) to provide funding to school districts allowing them to provide breakfast and lunch to any student requesting one at no cost to the student. The proposed legislation requires that DEED maximize the state's receipt of federal funds available for providing breakfast and lunch to students, thus helping minimize state expenditure.

During much of the pandemic, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) provided funding to all public schools allowing them to offer free meals to all students regardless of income. Universal school meals were found to be associated with positive outcomes for all economic backgrounds for a relatively low cost considering the associated improvement to student academic outcomes and health.

Currently 46% of students who eat school meals in Alaska, receive them for free. Since September 2024, ten states have passed legislation providing for universal school meals and 23 more have introduced such legislation. Many states are instituting universal meal programs because it has been clearly demonstrated in numerous studies that investing in school meals improves academic performance, student attendance, and physical and mental health. These programs have also been shown to greatly reduce student, parent, and staff stress.

Universal free school meals are associated with:

- Improved diet quality, food security, and reduced hunger.
- Improvement in English language art scores and math scores.
- Reduced stigma and an increase in student participation.

The Food Bank of Alaska, along with several other food, health, and education organizations enthusiastically endorse this legislation. Several Alaska School Districts have informed us that they are full-throated supporters of HB 12.

By implementing universal breakfast and lunch we can help Alaska's families, and we can truly make a difference for Alaska's students. HB 12 will help our state make strides ensuring students are at school and prepared to learn. This initiative will move the academic needle.

I respectfully urge your support for the passage of HB 12 thereby improving student performance and combating food insecurity. Please reach out to my office with any questions or concerns.