

# An Act to End Student Hunger with a Statewide Online School Meals Application

## About the bill

**LR 1650** would require the state to fund the creation of an online application for free and reduced-price meals that can be used in every school in the state at no cost to the schools.

## Current situation

- 47% of children in Maine are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. It can be a struggle to make sure that those families complete the forms in a timely manner when their only option is using a paper application.
- Schools that currently use an online system pay approximately \$2,500 every year to contract with a company to maintain their system.

## Benefits of a statewide online meals application

- Schools that are currently funding an online system would save the yearly cost of maintaining that online system. If all 737 schools in the state saved \$2,500 every year by using an online application provided by the state, the amount saved would equal \$1,842,500 in school expenses.
- Parents, students, and schools would be able to access and complete the application at no cost on a computer or mobile device.
- Every school in the state will save money and time and increase efficiency by eliminating manual entry of student information from thousands of paper applications.
- An online application provides for better access, less confusion, more privacy, more accurate results, and better integration with existing systems for data matching.
- An online system electronically verifies that all required information is entered before being able to submit the application.
- By making the application process more stream-lined, parents are more likely to fill out the application in a timely manner, saving school staff the effort of chasing down forms later.

It makes common sense and fiscal sense to create a statewide online application tool for free and reduced price meals in Maine.

This bill is supported by:



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