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8.19.2016

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New law expands school breakfast to 175,000 Illinois students

Bill unanimously passed Illinois House and Senate in May

ILLINOIS – More than 175,000 additional Illinois children will have access to crucial school breakfast programs as a bill that expands the “Breakfast After the Bell” model in Illinois was signed into law Friday. SB 2393 unanimously passed the state House and Senate this spring.

“Illinois children have such incredible potential, but hunger stifles that potential. In order to grow up healthy and excel in the classroom, children need to eat breakfast,” said Kate Maehr, co-chair of the Illinois Commission to End Hunger and CEO of the Greater Chicago Food Depository. “This new law makes breakfast accessible to more kids in our state and provides them the nourishment they need to succeed.”

1 in 5 children in Illinois is at risk of hunger. The state currently ranks 42nd among the 50 states and the District of Columbia in providing breakfast to children at school.

The law makes breakfast an official part of the school day in low-income schools and guarantees students have the healthy food they need to learn and be successful in the classroom. Incorporating breakfast in the school day ends transportation barriers and dissolves the stigma associated with receiving free or reduced-price meals.

“Monday mornings can be hard for some children, especially if they start the day hungry after a weekend of inconsistent food sources. This new legislation will go a long way in providing a nourishing breakfast for the children of Illinois,” said Tom Browning, co-chair of the Illinois No Kid Hungry Working Group and Director, Childhood Nutrition & Wellness at Illinois Action for Children.

In May, the General Assembly unanimously passed the bill. A statewide coalition of organizations advocated for the Breakfast After the Bell legislation, including Bread for the World, COFI, Catholic Charities, Central Illinois Foodbank, Eastern Illinois Foodbank, EverThrive Illinois, Feeding America, Feeding Illinois, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, Heartland Alliance, Hope Response Coalition, Illinois Action for Children, Illinois Hunger Coalition, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Illinois Migrant Council, Illinois Public Health Institute, Share Our Strength’s No Kid Hungry Campaign, Northern Illinois Food Bank, the Ounce of Prevention, River Bend Foodbank, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, St. Louis Area Foodbank, Tri-State Food Bank, Voices for Illinois Children and the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago.

The new requirement takes effect January 1, 2017.

About Rise and Shine Illinois

The Rise and Shine Illinois campaign is a partnership of several anti-hunger organizations with support from the national child hunger organization Share Our Strength (Illinois No Kid Hungry) and the JB and MK Pritzker Family Foundation. Illinois No Kid Hungry is a public-private coalition working to end childhood hunger in Illinois by ensuring all children get the healthy food they need, every day. Launched in 2012 as a partnership with Share Our Strength and the Illinois Commission to End Hunger, the campaign is working to connect children with effective nutrition programs, like school breakfast and summer meals, while teaching families how to cook healthy food on a limited budget.