



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 834

January Session, 2025

Substitute House Bill No. 7013

House of Representatives, May 6, 2025

The Committee on Appropriations reported through REP. WALKER of the 93rd Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING ENHANCEMENTS TO THE LOCAL FOOD FOR SCHOOLS INCENTIVE PROGRAM.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 10-215m of the general statutes is repealed and the
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2025*):

3 (a) As used in this section:

4 (1) "Local farm" means a farm, farmers' cooperative, food hub or
5 wholesale distributor located in Connecticut.

6 (2) "Regional farm" means a farm, farmers' cooperative, food hub or
7 wholesale distributor located in New York, Massachusetts, Rhode
8 Island, Vermont, New Hampshire or Maine.

9 (3) "Locally sourced food" means produce and other farm products
10 that have a traceable point of origin within Connecticut that are grown
11 or produced at, or sold by, a local farm and includes, but is not limited
12 to, value-added dairy, fish, pork, beef, poultry, eggs, fruits, vegetables

13 and minimally processed foods.

14 (4) "Regionally sourced food" means produce and other farm
15 products that have a traceable point of origin within New York,
16 Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire or Maine that
17 are grown or produced at, or sold by, a regional farm and includes, but
18 is not limited to, value-added dairy, fish, pork, beef, poultry, eggs, fruits,
19 vegetables and minimally processed foods.

20 (5) ["Eligible board of education"] "Eligible entity" means a local or
21 regional board of education that is participating in the National School
22 Lunch Program or a provider of child care services, as described in
23 section 19a-77.

24 (6) "Eligible meal program" means a meal program provided by an
25 eligible [board of education] entity to its children or students or a meal
26 provided as part of such [board's] entity's participation in the National
27 School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Seamless Summer
28 Option, After School Snack Program, Summer Food Service Program or
29 the Child and Adult Care Food Program administered by the United
30 States Department of Agriculture, including the At-Risk Afterschool
31 Meals component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program.
32 [administered by the United States Department of Agriculture.]

33 (b) For the fiscal year ending June 30, [2024] 2026, and each fiscal year
34 thereafter, the Department of [Agriculture] Education, in consultation
35 with the Department of [Education] Agriculture, shall administer the
36 local food for schools incentive program. Such program shall provide,
37 utilizing state and federal funds, reimbursement payments to eligible
38 [boards of education] entities for the purchase of locally sourced food
39 and regionally sourced food that [may] shall be used as part of such
40 [board's] entity's participation in an eligible meal program. An eligible
41 [board of education] entity shall be entitled to receive reimbursement
42 payments in accordance with the guidelines developed pursuant to
43 subsection (e) of this section and in an amount equal to (1) one-half of
44 such [board's] entity's expenditures for locally sourced foods, and (2)
45 one-third of such [board's] entity's expenditures for regionally sourced

46 foods.

47 (c) (1) The department shall receive requests from eligible [boards of
48 education] entities for reimbursement payments under the program in
49 a manner similar to how the department receives applications under
50 section 10-215b.

51 (2) Each eligible [board of education] entity shall (A) maintain a
52 record of such [board's] entity's expenditures for all locally sourced food
53 and regionally sourced food, as well as documentation confirming the
54 place of origin of such food, as prescribed by the department, and (B)
55 submit, upon request of the department, such records and
56 documentation to the department for review.

57 (d) Any locally sourced food or regionally sourced food for which an
58 eligible [board of education] entity seeks reimbursement payments
59 under this section shall comply with the nutrition standards established
60 by the department pursuant to section 10-215e.

61 (e) The department shall develop guidelines for the implementation
62 of the program. Such guidelines shall (1) establish a maximum
63 reimbursement amount based on total [student] enrollment for each
64 eligible [board of education] entity, (2) assist eligible [boards of
65 education] entities in participating in the program, and (3) promote
66 geographic, social, economic and racial equity, which may include a
67 preference for [socially disadvantaged farmers, as defined in 7 USC
68 2279(a), as amended from time to time,] historically underserved
69 farmers or small farm businesses.

70 (f) The department shall develop a survey to be distributed annually
71 to any eligible [board of education] entity that receives reimbursement
72 payments under this section. Such survey shall be designed to collect
73 information to assist the department in implementing and improving
74 the program.

75 (g) In addition to the reimbursement payments otherwise provided
76 pursuant to this section, the department [may, within available

77 appropriations, provide supplemental grants to eligible boards of
78 education. Such supplemental grant funds may be expended for the
79 purpose of purchasing kitchen equipment, engaging with school
80 nutrition or farm-to-school consultants or training relating to the
81 processing, preparation and serving of locally sourced food and
82 regionally sourced food. In awarding supplemental grants under this
83 subsection, the department shall give priority to an eligible board of
84 education for a town designated as an alliance district pursuant to
85 section 10-262u] shall use at least twenty per cent of the annual
86 appropriation for the local food for schools incentive program to engage
87 with external partners to provide supplemental services. Such
88 supplemental services may include, but need not be limited to, school
89 nutrition or farm-to-school consultants, technical assistance, outreach,
90 training or evaluation relating to the core elements of farm-to-school
91 programming, such as procurement, processing, preparation, serving
92 and education of locally sourced food and regionally sourced food.

93 (h) The department may accept gifts, grants and donations, including
94 in-kind donations, for the administration of the local food for schools
95 incentive program and to implement the provisions of this section. The
96 department shall seek and maximize existing federal funding available
97 for purposes of administering the local food for schools incentive
98 program.

99 (i) Any unexpended funds appropriated for purposes of this section
100 shall not lapse at the end of the fiscal year but shall be available for
101 expenditure during the next fiscal year.

102 (j) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, for the fiscal year
103 ending June 30, [2024] 2026, and each fiscal year thereafter, the amount
104 of reimbursement payments payable to eligible [boards of education]
105 entities shall be reduced proportionately if the total of such
106 reimbursement payments in such year exceeds the amount
107 appropriated for such reimbursement payments for such year.

108 (k) Not later than January 1, [2025] 2026, and annually thereafter, the
109 department shall submit a report on the local food for schools incentive

110 program to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly
 111 having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with
 112 the provisions of section 11-4a. Such report shall include, but need not
 113 be limited to, an accounting of the funds appropriated and received by
 114 the department for the program, descriptions of the reimbursement
 115 payments made under the program and an evaluation of the program.

116 Sec. 2. (*Effective July 1, 2025*) For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026,
 117 the Department of Education shall hire one full-time employee to
 118 administer the local food for schools incentive program described in
 119 section 10-215m of the general statutes, as amended by this act. Such
 120 employee shall be responsible for (1) identifying and promoting the
 121 critical components of individual farm-to-school programs and
 122 advising the Commissioner of Education on strategies to implement the
 123 program, (2) supporting partnerships with public and nonprofit
 124 organizations to establish a structure to facilitate communication
 125 between farmers and school district officials, (3) conducting workshops,
 126 training sessions and technical assistance to school food service
 127 directors, school personnel, farmers, produce distributors and
 128 processors regarding the demand for and availability of Connecticut
 129 farm products, (4) identifying grants, donations and other funding
 130 sources to assist in funding the program, and (5) seeking available
 131 federal funding, including making application to the United States
 132 Department of Agriculture for grants and other federal financial
 133 assistance.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	10-215m
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section

Section 1	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	10-215m
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2025</i>	New section

ED *Joint Favorable Subst. C/R*

APP

APP *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 26 \$	FY 27 \$
Various Local and Regional School Boards	See Below	See Below	See Below

Explanation

The bill expands Local Food for Schools Incentive Program eligibility to include child care providers and requires at least 20% of the annual appropriation for the program be used to engage with external partners for supplemental services. These changes may alter the distribution of the grant awards received by various local and regional school boards, beginning in FY 26.

The bill also transfers administration for this program from the Department of Agriculture to the State Department of Education (SDE) and requires SDE to hire one full time employee to administer the program in FY 26. This does not have a fiscal impact to the state as SDE previously received budgeted funding and a position for this role, beginning in FY 24.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to applications for the program.

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 7013*****AN ACT CONCERNING ENHANCEMENTS TO THE LOCAL FOOD FOR SCHOOLS INCENTIVE PROGRAM.*****SUMMARY**

This bill makes several changes to the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP), which provides reimbursements for purchasing locally or regionally sourced food to be used for eligible meal programs (see BACKGROUND).

First, it expands the program to child care providers (i.e. licensed child care centers, group child care homes, and family child care homes) that provide meal programs. Currently, only local or regional boards of education participating in the National School Lunch Program are eligible.

The bill makes the State Department of Education (SDE), rather than the Department of Agriculture (DoAg), the lead agency responsible for administering the program and DoAg, rather than SDE, the consulting agency. In practice, the program is currently implemented collaboratively between the two agencies, pursuant to a memorandum of understanding outlining each agency's responsibilities. For FY 26, the bill requires SDE to hire a full-time employee to administer the program and take on specified responsibilities, including identifying other funding sources. The bill additionally requires SDE to seek and maximize existing federal funding available for administering the program.

Under the bill, SDE must use at least 20% of LFSIP's annual appropriation to engage with external partners to provide supplemental services, including school nutrition or farm-to-school consultants, technical assistance, outreach, training, or evaluation related to the core

elements of farm-to school programs (e.g., procurement, processing, preparation, serving, and education of locally and regionally sourced food). The bill eliminates a provision in current law authorizing supplemental LFSIP grants that schools could use to pay for similar supplemental services; current law gives priority for these grants to alliance districts.

The bill also (1) allows SDE to give preference to historically underserved farmers, rather than social disadvantaged farmers as under current law; (2) specifies that food must be used in an eligible meal program in order to be eligible for reimbursement; and (3) makes numerous technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

EMPLOYEE DUTIES

Under the bill, the employee SDE hires must be responsible for:

1. identifying and promoting the critical components of individual farm-to-school programs and advising the SDE commissioner on program implementation strategies;
2. supporting partnerships with public and nonprofit organizations to create a structure to facilitate communication between farmers and school district officials;
3. providing workshops, training sessions, and technical assistance to school food service directors, school personnel, farmers, produce distributors, and processors on Connecticut farm product availability and demand;
4. identifying grants, donations, and other sources to help fund the program; and
5. seeking available federal funding, including applying to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for grants and other federal financial assistance.

PREFERENCE FOR CERTAIN FARMERS

By law, LFSIP implementation guidelines must promote geographic, social, economic, and racial equity. To that end, current law allows the administering agency to include a preference for socially disadvantaged farmers. The bill instead allows this preference to be given to historically underserved farmers.

Under federal and state law, a “socially disadvantaged farmer” is one who is part of a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice due to their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. Generally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture considers the following to be “historically underserved farmers”: beginning farmers, limited resource farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, and veteran farmers. However, the bill does not specifically define this term, and there are several definitions under federal law.

Existing law, unchanged by the bill, also allows the agency to give preference to small farm businesses.

BACKGROUND***Local Food for Schools Incentive Program***

LFSIP provides reimbursements to eligible entities (currently, school boards) that purchase locally or regionally sourced food to be used in an eligible meal program. Locally sourced foods are eligible for 50% reimbursement, and regionally sourced foods are eligible for 30% reimbursement.

Food purchases eligible for reimbursement are produce and farm products that are grown or produced at or sold by farms located in, and have a traceable point of origin within, (1) Connecticut (local farms) or (2) New England or New York (regional farms). They include value-added dairy, fish, pork, beef, poultry, eggs, fruits, vegetables, and minimally processed foods.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference - APP

Yea 44 Nay 0 (03/21/2025)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 54 Nay 0 (04/24/2025)