

USDA Unlikely To Approve NC's Child Nutrition Waiver

NCASA Advocacy Team



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is unlikely to approve NC's request to continue to provide students with free meals regardless of meal eligibility status in the new school year, according to information shared by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Dr. Lynn Harvey, Director of School Nutrition Services at DPI, shared the disappointing news she received from the USDA Southeast Regional Director with superintendents on Wednesday. "The official

indicated the decision is not absolute and the Secretary of Agriculture could overrule the agency's decision at the last hour, but that seems unlikely," according to DPI. "No specific reason was stated for the denial."

Districts are authorized to continue to provide free meals to students through August 31, after which districts, especially those reopening with remote-only instruction, will likely face new challenges in providing meals to students based on their eligibility status. According to Dr. Harvey, DPI is currently "seeking the authority for flexibility in Transportation Funding (PRC-056) in order to continue to use this funding source to support the use of yellow buses to transport meals to students," but this funding flexibility has also not yet been provided. The North Carolina Association of School Administrators (NCASA) will continue to work with DPI and our national affiliate, the School Superintendents' Association (AASA), to advocate for maximum flexibility and adequate funding for schools to provide these critical nutrition services throughout the school year.

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