

**House File 851 - Introduced**

HOUSE FILE 851  
BY COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

(SUCCESSOR TO HSB 173)

(COMPANION TO SF 525 BY COMMITTEE  
ON AGRICULTURE)

**A BILL FOR**

1 An Act relating to student nutrition, including by modifying  
2 the curricula provided to students enrolled in kindergarten  
3 through grade twelve to include instruction related to  
4 nutrition, modifying provisions related to the agriculture,  
5 food, and natural resources component of the career and  
6 technical education instruction provided to students enrolled  
7 in grades nine through twelve, and modifying provisions  
8 related to school meal programs, and including effective date  
9 provisions.

10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. Section 256.11, subsections 2, 3, and 4, Code  
2 2025, are amended to read as follows:

3 2. a. The kindergarten program shall include experiences  
4 designed to develop healthy emotional and social habits and  
5 growth in the language arts and communication skills, as well  
6 as a capacity for the completion of individual tasks, and  
7 protect and increase physical well-being with attention given  
8 to experiences relating to the development of life skills and,  
9 subject to section 279.80, age-appropriate and research-based  
10 human growth and development. The kindergarten program shall  
11 also include instruction related to nutrition that emphasizes all  
12 of the following:

13 (1) The importance of animal-based protein, dairy,  
14 vegetables, and fruit.

15 (2) The nutritional benefits of animal-based protein, dairy,  
16 vegetables, and fruit.

17 (3) The role that animal-based protein, dairy, vegetables,  
18 and fruit play in a balanced diet.

19 b. A kindergarten teacher shall be licensed to teach in  
20 kindergarten.

21 c. An accredited nonpublic school must meet the requirements  
22 of this subsection only if the nonpublic school offers a  
23 kindergarten program; provided, however, that section 279.80  
24 shall not apply to a nonpublic school.

25 3. a. The following areas shall be taught in grades one  
26 through six: English-language arts, social studies, mathematics,  
27 science, health, physical education, traffic safety, music,  
28 visual art, and, subject to section 279.80, age-appropriate  
29 and research-based human growth and development. The health  
30 curriculum shall include all of the following:

31 (1) The characteristics of communicable diseases.

32 (2) Instruction related to nutrition that emphasizes all of  
33 the following:

34 (a) The importance of animal-based protein, dairy,  
35 vegetables, and fruit.

1 (b) The nutritional benefits of animal-based protein, dairy,  
2 vegetables, and fruit.

3 (c) The role that animal-based protein, dairy, vegetables,  
4 and fruit play in a balanced diet.

5 b. Computer science instruction incorporating the standards  
6 established under section 256.7, subsection 26, paragraph "a",  
7 subparagraph (4), shall be offered in at least one grade  
8 level commencing with the school year beginning July 1, 2023.  
9 ~~The health curriculum shall include the characteristics of~~  
10 ~~communicable diseases.~~

11 c. The state board as part of accreditation standards shall  
12 adopt curriculum definitions for implementing the elementary  
13 program.

14 4. a. The following shall be taught in grades seven  
15 and eight: English-language arts; social studies, including  
16 instruction related to civics; mathematics; science; health;  
17 age-appropriate and research-based human growth and development;  
18 career exploration and development; physical education; music;  
19 and visual art.

20 (1) Career exploration and development shall be designed so  
21 that students are appropriately prepared to create an individual  
22 career and academic plan pursuant to section 279.61, incorporate  
23 foundational career and technical education concepts aligned with  
24 the six career and technical education service areas as defined  
25 in subsection 5, paragraph "h", incorporate relevant twenty-first  
26 century skills to facilitate career readiness, and introduce  
27 students to career opportunities within the local community  
28 and across this state. This subparagraph shall not apply to  
29 the teaching of career exploration and development in nonpublic  
30 schools.

31 (2) The health curriculum shall include all of the following:

32 (a) Age-appropriate and research-based information regarding  
33 the characteristics of sexually transmitted diseases.

34 (b) Instruction related to nutrition that emphasizes all of  
35 the following:

1     (i) The importance of animal-based protein, dairy,  
2 vegetables, and fruit.

3     (ii) The nutritional benefits of animal-based protein, dairy,  
4 vegetables, and fruit.

5     (iii) The role that animal-based protein, dairy, vegetables,  
6 and fruit play in a balanced diet.

7     b. Computer science instruction incorporating the standards  
8 established under section 256.7, subsection 26, paragraph "a",  
9 subparagraph (4), shall be offered in at least one grade  
10 level commencing with the school year beginning July 1, 2023.  
11 ~~Career exploration and development shall be designed so that~~  
12 ~~students are appropriately prepared to create an individual~~  
13 ~~career and academic plan pursuant to section 279.61, incorporate~~  
14 ~~foundational career and technical education concepts aligned~~  
15 ~~with the six career and technical education service areas as~~  
16 ~~defined in subsection 5, paragraph "h", incorporate relevant~~  
17 ~~twenty-first century skills to facilitate career readiness, and~~  
18 ~~introduce students to career opportunities within the local~~  
19 ~~community and across this state. The health curriculum shall~~  
20 ~~include age-appropriate and research-based information regarding~~  
21 ~~the characteristics of sexually transmitted diseases.~~

22     c. The state board as part of accreditation standards shall  
23 adopt curriculum definitions for implementing the program in  
24 grades seven and eight. However, this subsection shall not  
25 apply to the teaching of career exploration and development in  
26 nonpublic schools.

27     Sec. 2. Section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph h,  
28 subparagraph (1), subparagraph division (a), Code 2025, is  
29 amended to read as follows:

30     (a) Agriculture, food, and natural resources, which shall  
31 include instruction relating to food production and the benefits  
32 of local sourcing.

33     Sec. 3. Section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph j,  
34 subparagraph (1), Code 2025, is amended to read as follows:

35     (1) One unit of health education which may include personal

1 health; food and nutrition; environmental health; safety and  
2 survival skills; consumer health; family life; age-appropriate  
3 and research-based human growth and development; substance  
4 use disorder and nonuse; emotional and social health; health  
5 resources; cardiopulmonary resuscitation; and prevention and  
6 control of disease, including age-appropriate and research-based  
7 information regarding sexually transmitted diseases. The one  
8 unit of health education shall include instruction related to  
9 nutrition that emphasizes all of the following:

10 (a) The importance of animal-based protein, dairy,  
11 vegetables, and fruit.

12 (b) The nutritional benefits of animal-based protein, dairy,  
13 vegetables, and fruit.

14 (c) The role that animal-based protein, dairy, vegetables,  
15 and fruit play in a balanced diet.

16 Sec. 4. Section 256E.7, subsection 2, paragraph g, Code 2025,  
17 is amended by adding the following new subparagraphs:

18 NEW SUBPARAGRAPH. (01) The educational standards established  
19 in section 256.11, subsections 2, 3, and 4, and section  
20 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph "j", subparagraph (1), related to  
21 instruction on nutrition.

22 NEW SUBPARAGRAPH. (3) The educational standards established  
23 in section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph "h", subparagraph (1),  
24 subparagraph division (a), related to instruction relating to  
25 food production and the benefits of local sourcing.

26 Sec. 5. Section 256F.4, subsection 2, Code 2025, is amended  
27 by adding the following new paragraphs:

28 NEW PARAGRAPH. *Op.* Be subject to and comply with the  
29 requirements of section 256.11, subsections 2, 3, and 4, and  
30 section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph "j", subparagraph (1),  
31 related to instruction on nutrition in the same manner as a  
32 school district.

33 NEW PARAGRAPH. *r.* Be subject to and comply with the  
34 requirements of section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph  
35 "h", subparagraph (1), subparagraph division (a), related to

1 instruction relating to food production and the benefits of local  
2 sourcing in the same manner as a school district.

3 Sec. 6. NEW SECTION. **283A.14 Application for waiver —**  
4 **updated nutritional guidelines — joint committee.**

5 1. The general assembly finds and declares all of the  
6 following:

7 a. The nutritional needs and cultural preferences of the  
8 students in Iowa might be better served by localizing nutritional  
9 standards.

10 b. Unique regional food sources, including corn, pork, and  
11 dairy, are not adequately addressed by federal guidelines.

12 c. Flexibility in nutritional standards can enhance the  
13 ability of schools to provide meals that are both nutritious and  
14 appealing to students, which may increase student participation  
15 in school breakfast and lunch programs.

16 2. Within ninety days after the effective date of this Act,  
17 the department of education shall apply for a waiver under the  
18 provisions of the federal National School Lunch Act of 1966,  
19 42 U.S.C. §1751 et seq., and the federal Child Nutrition Act of  
20 1966, 42 U.S.C. §1771 et seq., to request all of the following:

21 a. An exemption from sodium limits, whole grain requirements,  
22 and fruit and vegetable variety stipulations in school breakfast  
23 and lunch programs.

24 b. Permission to substitute or modify federal requirements  
25 with state-specific nutritional guidelines that align with Iowa's  
26 dietary recommendations or cultural food practices.

27 3. If the waiver applied for by the department of education  
28 under subsection 2 is granted, the department of education shall  
29 adopt updated guidelines for what constitutes a nutritionally  
30 adequate meal. The department shall consult with the department  
31 of agriculture and land stewardship, experts in nutrition,  
32 educators, parents, local farmers, and other stakeholders during  
33 the process of adopting updated guidelines for what constitutes a  
34 nutritionally adequate meal. The guidelines for what constitutes  
35 a nutritionally adequate meal may reflect local preferences,

1 regional food sources, including corn, pork, and dairy, and  
2 cultural considerations. The guidelines for what constitutes a  
3 nutritionally adequate meal must satisfy all of the following  
4 requirements:

5 a. Be at least as stringent in promoting health and  
6 preventing chronic diseases as the federal guidelines.

7 b. Maintain a commitment to nutritional health and student  
8 well-being.

9 c. Prioritize the following food groups, in the order listed:

10 (1) Animal-based protein, including but not limited to beef,  
11 pork, poultry, fish, and eggs.

12 (2) Dairy products, including but not limited to milk,  
13 cheese, and yogurt.

14 (3) Vegetables, including but not limited to local and  
15 seasonal produce.

16 (4) Fresh fruit or dried or frozen fruit when fresh fruit is  
17 not seasonally available.

18 4. If the waiver applied for by the department of education  
19 under subsection 2 is granted, the department of education  
20 and the department of agriculture and land stewardship shall  
21 establish a joint committee to do all of the following:

22 a. Oversee the implementation of the guidelines for what  
23 constitutes a nutritionally adequate meal.

24 b. Review the outcomes associated with the guidelines for  
25 what constitutes a nutritionally adequate meal.

26 c. Study the nutritional science associated with the  
27 guidelines for what constitutes a nutritionally adequate meal  
28 and seek feedback from schools, parents, and agricultural  
29 stakeholders related to the guidelines.

30 d. Provide recommendations to the department of education  
31 related to changes that may need to be made to the guidelines for  
32 what constitutes a nutritionally adequate meal.

33 5. If the waiver applied for by the department of education  
34 under subsection 2 is granted, the department of education shall  
35 submit to the general assembly an annual report, beginning on

1 or before the first June 30 after the implementation of the new  
2 guidelines, which describes the impact of the guidelines related  
3 to what constitutes a nutritionally adequate meal, including  
4 information related to school breakfast and lunch program  
5 participation, student health outcomes, feedback from school  
6 districts, progress in implementing the guidelines, challenges  
7 associated with implementing the guidelines, and recommendations  
8 for further enhancement of the guidelines.

9 6. If the waiver applied for by the department of education  
10 under subsection 2 is granted, the department of education  
11 shall conduct an evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the  
12 guidelines for what constitutes a nutritionally adequate meal  
13 compared to the comparable federal standards within five years  
14 after the effective date of the waiver.

15 Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE. The following, being deemed of  
16 immediate importance, takes effect upon enactment:

17 The section of this Act enacting section 283A.14.

18 EXPLANATION

19 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with  
20 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

21 This bill relates to student nutrition, including by modifying  
22 the curricula provided to students enrolled in kindergarten  
23 through grade 12 to include instruction related to nutrition,  
24 modifying provisions related to the agriculture, food, and  
25 natural resources component of the career and technical education  
26 instruction provided to students enrolled in grades 9 through 12,  
27 and modifying provisions related to school meal programs.

28 The bill requires school districts, accredited nonpublic  
29 schools, charter schools, and innovation zone schools to  
30 provide instruction related to nutrition to students enrolled in  
31 kindergarten through grade 12. The bill also requires school  
32 districts, accredited nonpublic schools, charter schools, and  
33 innovation zone schools to provide instruction related to food  
34 production and the benefits of local sourcing as part of the  
35 agriculture, food, and natural resources component of the career

1 and technical education curriculum in grades 9 through 12.

2 The bill creates new Code section 283A.14, which requires  
3 the department of education (DE) to, within 90 days after the  
4 effective date of the bill, apply for a waiver under federal  
5 law to request an exemption from certain limits and requirements  
6 related to school breakfast and lunch programs and to request  
7 permission to substitute or modify federal requirements with  
8 state-specific nutritional guidelines that align with Iowa's  
9 dietary recommendations or cultural food practices. The bill  
10 provides that if the waiver is granted, DE is required to  
11 adopt updated guidelines for what constitutes a nutritionally  
12 adequate meal for purposes of Iowa's school meal programs. The  
13 bill establishes requirements related to these guidelines and  
14 persons with whom DE is required to consult during the process  
15 of updating the guidelines. Also, if the waiver is granted,  
16 the bill requires DE and the department of agriculture and  
17 land stewardship to establish a joint committee related to the  
18 guidelines and establishes the joint committee's duties.

19 New Code section 283A.14 requires DE to submit an annual  
20 report to the general assembly that describes the impact of  
21 the guidelines for what constitutes a nutritionally adequate  
22 meal, including information related to school breakfast and  
23 lunch program participation, student health outcomes, feedback  
24 from school districts, progress in implementing the guidelines,  
25 challenges associated with implementing the guidelines, and  
26 recommendations for further enhancement of the guidelines, if  
27 the waiver is granted. New Code section 283A.14 also requires  
28 DE to conduct an evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the  
29 guidelines for what constitutes a nutritionally adequate meal  
30 compared to the comparable federal standards within five years  
31 after the effective date of the waiver, if the waiver is granted.

32 New Code section 283A.14 takes effect upon enactment.