

HB0281 / SB0152 - SCH CD-FOOD ALLERGY GUIDELINES (formerly HB5338)

HB0281/ SB0152 require the State Board of Education, in conjunction with the Department of Public Health, to develop and make available to each school board guidelines for the management of students with life-threatening food allergies. It also requires each school board to implement a policy based on the guidelines for the management of students with life-threatening food allergies. It provides a safe school environment for food allergic children.

Ten states including Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Tennessee, Vermont and Washington have already implemented guidelines similar to this bill, providing guidance and expertise to local schools who are dealing with the challenges of educating food allergic children safely in the school environment.

Bills HB0281/ SB0152 contain the same language as bill HB5338 which was unanimously passed by the House and the Senate last session.

Impacts:

- 2.2 Million school aged children in US have food allergies
- 93,000 school aged children in Illinois have food allergies
- 88% of all American schools have children with food allergies
- 95% of school nurses indicated that food allergies were as big of a problem as diabetes and almost as prevalent as learning disabilities

Benefits:

- Keeps children with food allergies safe while at school
- Streamlines school district's treatment of children with food allergies
- Prevents inconsistent treatment of children with food allergies
- Shares best practices among schools in Illinois
- Minimizes research and resources required by schools to create effective food allergy policies
- Supports and educates schools to learn more about food allergies
- Formalizes a plan to educate school personnel and provides guidance to them about their responsibilities

Facts about food allergies:

- More than 12 million Americans suffer from food allergies.
- Food allergies kill more than 150 Americans each year and are responsible for 30,000 emergency room visits.
- The number of children under age five in the United States suffering from peanut allergies doubled (between 1997 and 2002).
- There are currently no medications to cure or control food allergies. Strict avoidance of the allergenic food is the only way to avoid a reaction.
- The most common allergens –peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, milk, fish, shellfish, wheat and soy – are staples of our food supply and nearly impossible to avoid completely.
- For some children, even small traces of allergenic foods, as little as a drop of milk left on a school desk from another child's snack, for instance, can trigger life-threatening anaphylaxis.

It is essential for the well-being of our children that schools are provided with strong and unambiguous guidelines to help them manage food allergies in the most effective and helpful way. A safe environment is a prerequisite for our children to learn and excel. All children are entitled to an excellent education and the opportunity to live to be productive citizens. Please make it happen and support bill HB0281/ SB0152.

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Food Allergy Statistics obtained from: <http://www.faiusa.org/> and <http://www.foodallergy.org/downloads/FoodAllergyFactsandStatistics.pdf>