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*For Immediate Release*

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## **Representative Kane supports bill expanding student access to school breakfast**

**BOSTON** – State Representative Hannah Kane, R-Shrewsbury, recently joined with her House colleagues to approve legislation designed to expand student access to school breakfast in low-income communities.

House Bill 4218, *An Act regarding breakfast after the bell*, requires public schools to offer all students a school breakfast after the beginning of the instructional day if at least 60% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the federal National School Lunch Program. The bill was engrossed by the House of Representatives on a vote of 156-0 on November 20.

According to the Ending Hunger in Our Classrooms 2019 Annual Report, Massachusetts ranks 33<sup>rd</sup> out of 50 states in the percentage of low-income children who eat a school breakfast every day. The report estimates that nearly 159,000 low-income students in the Commonwealth are not eating a morning meal at school each day.

“Eating a full, healthy breakfast has a positive, proven effect on how children are able to learn and function throughout the school day,” said Rep. Kane. “This legislation works to ensure breakfast, and with it a heightened ability to meaningfully participate in the school day, is offered to all children in the Commonwealth – not just those who can afford it. I am excited to see the influence it will have on making not only breakfast, but the school day that follows it, a better experience for our students and teachers.”

Breakfast After the Bell was a priority bill this session for the Food System Caucus, the second-largest caucus in the Legislature, which Representative Kane co-founded in early 2019 and serves as a Co-Chair of. Decreasing food insecurity and increase access to healthy, nutritious food is a key priority of the Food System Caucus. This bill will help prepare students for learning by making sure they have access to a nutritious breakfast at the start of the school day. The bill allows schools to determine the breakfast service model that best suits its students’ needs, and to consult with non-profit organizations with experience addressing hunger and food security issues and best practices for improving student access to school breakfast.

House Bill 4218 requires the Department of Education and Secondary Education (DESE) to conduct an initial assessment of all schools that are eligible for the school breakfast program by December 31, 2021

so that schools are prepared to offer school breakfast programs by the beginning of the 2022-2023 academic year. The bill contains provisions allowing the school breakfast requirement to be waived for 1 year if a school shows it has a breakfast participation rate of 80% or higher using its current delivery model, or if the school demonstrates an extreme hardship related to implementation.

House Bill 4218 now heads to the Senate for further action.

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