



NEW JERSEY SENATE

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Via Mail and Facsimile (609-292-0500)

Christopher D. Cerf, Acting Commissioner
Department of Education
100 River View Plaza
P.O. Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Acting Commissioner Cerf,

In a front page article dated August 21, 2011, the Newark Star-Ledger reported abuses of the free and reduced price lunch program by the Elizabeth Board of Education. According to the article, the president of the school board, a principal, and a supervisor of custodians enrolled their children in the free and reduced price lunch program, even though their incomes far exceed the level needed to qualify for the program.

This year, when you appeared before the Senate Budget Committee, I informed you about the potential for abuse of the free and reduced price lunch program, and how enrolling a student in the program triggers an "At Risk" designation, which results in an additional \$6,000-7,000 of state school aid for a student. This additional school aid, which can exceed hundreds of millions of dollars, is collected from taxpayers throughout the state.

I also bring to your attention a June 2011 report, issued by the State Auditor, Stephen Eells, in which he highlighted the potential for fraud and abuse of the free and reduced price lunch program. A copy of his report is enclosed.

These allegations of fraud within the Elizabeth school district need to be investigated immediately. Please accept this letter as my formal request for such an investigation.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Doherty
Member of the State Senate

MJD/mbw
Enclosure