LOCAL IMPACT

## Lunch change may aid Butler students

Bill could ensure schoolchildren get meals during summer.

## By Wayne Baker

Staff Writer

BUTLER COUNTY — Butler County school districts and organizations are applauding a bill that would ensure school-age children get nutritious meals during summer vacation.

The Senate Agriculture Committee cleared legislation Thursday that reauthorizes childhood nutrition programs, which includes a provision U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, introduced to expand school lunch programs during the summer.

## A LOOK AT THE BILL

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown's Hunger Free Summer for Kids Act would increase access to summer federal child nutrition programs by:

- Making it easier for children in rural areas who can't get to a feeding site to still get nutritious meals.
- Allowing children to eat meals off-site if certain conditions are met.

The bipartisan Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act of 2016 was passed by a voice vote Thursday by the committee. It will soon

Meals continued on A7

## Meals

continued from A1

be placed on the legislative calendar. From there, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., will need to call up the bill for consideration.

The bill would reauthorize funding levels for school lunch and breakfast programs, the Women, Infants and Children supplemental nutrition program, and after-school and summer food programs through September 2020.

Joni Copas, communications director for the Hamilton City School District, said the legislation will help districts that are trying to feed students who need the help.

"Last year we fed 6,694 lunches and 4,716 breakfasts for our elementary school students who attended summer school," she said.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture released statistics indicating more than 630,000 Ohio children receive free or reduced-priced lunch on an average day.

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Brown was joined at a press conference Thursday by Jessica Shelly, food service director at Cincinnati Public Schools, who outlined how the legislation would support programs in southwest Ohio.

"Initiatives like the
Hunger Free Summer for
Kids ... are exactly the
support needed to make it
easier for children to get
a healthy meal and make
sure that no child goes
hungry during the summer," Shelly said. "The
streamlining of the summer feeding program
sponsor paperwork will
allow Cincinnati Pub-

lic Schools to continue to work in tandem with community partners to reach and feed more children in our community."

Mag Baker, president/ CEO of the Butler County United Way, agrees with that assessment.

"Getting the needed nutrition to sustain mind and body is paramount to education. Our funding of the Backpack Program through Shared Harvest Foodbank provides nourishment to hungry school children over

the weekend to maintain their mental stamina so they are ready and able to learn when they attend school on Monday," she said.

"On average, this program served nearly 1,800 children each week, and test scores for those children have improved," Baker said. "I believe this same concept being carried over the summer months in an organized and consistent way would have an extremely positive impact."