



Randolph ed group fills school meals gap, pushes for change

Posted May 12, 2019 at 3:17 PM

Updated May 12, 2019 at 4:14 PM

The second program of the Randolph Foundation for Education (RFE), the Delroy Fund, will fill the Randolph Public Schools' \$4,000-plus annual budget gap on free-and-reduced-price meals for students, according to RFE officials.

"The Delroy Fund is partly funded now, and we have asked large-scale meal providers around Randolph — like McDonald's and Dunkin's — to contribute," stated Jesse Gordon, the RFE president. "In addition, we're circulating a petition for residents to sign, to fill the budget gap permanently, by changing Randolph's state reimbursement method."

The petition seeks to enroll Randolph in the Commonwealth's Community Eligibility Option, which waives meal fees for all children regardless of income status, and provides free breakfast and lunch at every public school for every student. The budget gap arises because some parents of otherwise eligible students fail to provide the required state and federal paperwork, Gordon stated. Hence each year, the school administration is left with about \$4,000 to \$5,000 of unreimbursed meal expenses.

A Petition to School Committee, as defined by the Town Charter, requires a public discussion by the School Committee after 150 registered voters are certified to have signed.

"The current system puts the burden on parents to provide the paperwork, and some parents refuse because they want to minimize their contact with the federal government," said Bruce Pontbriand, an RFE board member and former Randolph School Committee member. "Our proposal would shift the paperwork burden from parents to the school administration — with the advantage that each and every student would receive free breakfast and lunch at school, instead of only some students receiving reduced price meals."

Boston Public Schools already apply the system proposed for Randolph, according to Gordon. A school district is eligible if 80 percent of the students in the district qualify for free- or reduced-price meals. Randolph qualifies.

The RFE petition recommends that the Randolph school district apply for the program in October, when the federal paperwork is due.

The Delroy Fund is named after Delroy Gordon (no relation to Jesse Gordon), a Randolph social activist who passed away last year. Delroy was the husband of Ida Gordon, the current School Committee president, who also is a board member of the Randolph Foundation for Education. Last year, outgoing School Superintendent Thomas Anderson informed the Randolph Foundation about the ongoing budget shortfall in the school meals program, and sought their help, Jesse Gordon stated.

“The Randolph Foundation is fund-raising to fill the gap short-term,” Jesse Gordon said. “You can help by asking large restaurants to donate – and if they don’t know about the program, give them this article. And we are working to fill the gap long-term with our petition. You can help by signing the petition, which is available on our website by clicking on the Delroy Fund button.”

The Randolph Foundation for Education is 501(c)(3)-pending, so donations are tax deductible. The RFE can be reached at www.RandolphFoundation.com or at P.O. Box 530, Randolph MA 02368.