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Baltimore and Howard Counties

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Committee

Executive Nominations Committee

Joint Committee on Ending Homelessness

Chair

Joint Committee on Fair Practices and
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Support: SB 760

Public Schools - Student Meal Programs and Meal Charge Policies

Issue:

- **Unpaid meal debt** is debt owed by a student for school meals or insufficient funds in the student's meal account. Students with school meal debt may be ineligible for FARMs but still have difficulty paying for breakfast or lunch (p. 5).
- **Lunch shaming** involves harsh practices which shame, stigmatize, or otherwise punish students who cannot pay for their meals.
- There is a lack of standardization in meal charge policies, and policies may be conveyed to the public in an inaccessible format. Several school districts deal with school lunch debt in ways that shame or improperly respond to the underlying issues at-hand.

What SB 760 Does:

- Ensures that each county will establish a meal charge policy which contains specific key criteria. Discusses how the meal charge policy as well as information about meal debt and the free meal program will be conveyed to the public and/or parents and guardians.
- Prohibits school districts from engaging in lunch shaming, specifies what an appropriate alternative meal looks like, and requires MSDE to collect relevant data on the subject.

How SB 760 Could Help:

- Researchers have found links between food insecurity and learning outcomes.
- This legislation will ensure that no students are unduly stigmatized or unable to succeed in the classroom, based on socioeconomic status.
- Ensures that commintions about school lunch debt be with parents instead of students
- Ensure parents are aware of school lunch debt policies