



Prince George's County Board of Education
14201 School Lane • Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772 • www.pgcps.org

February 26, 2020

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Telephone: 301-952-6115
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Re: Testimonial Statement for Maryland General Assembly *House Bill 1173 - Public Schools - School Meal Programs and Meal Charge Policies*

2020 Legislative Session

Board Member
K. Alexander Wallace
District 7

Sponsor: Delegate Geraldine Valentino-Smith, et al.

Position: SUPPORT

Schools:

Andrew Jackson Academy
Arrowhead Elementary
Barack Obama Elementary
Benjamin Foulois Creative and
Performing Arts K-8
Benjamin Stoddert Middle
Bradbury Heights Elementary
District Heights Elementary
Dr. Henry A. Wise Jr. High
Drew-Freeman Middle
Imagine Foundations at Morningside
Public Charter School
Imagine Lincoln Public Charter
Longfields Elementary
North Forestville Elementary
Overlook Spanish Immersion
Princeton Elementary
Samuel P. Massie Academy
Suitland Elementary
Suitland High
William Beanes Elementary

To Chairwoman Kaiser, Vice Chairman Washington, and the members of the House of Delegates' Ways and Means Committee:

It is my belief that no student in the State of Maryland should have to potentially endure the public humiliation that occurs when a meal is taken away from them and, in return, are handed a substitute, alternative meal that I, and many others, see as simply inadequate. The practice of meal shaming serves no other purpose than to be a catalyst for school-based bullying, the degradation of our students' emotional well-being, and the stigmatization of differing socioeconomic statuses that exist amongst our student bodies.

I approach this matter with two perspectives; first, as an elected member of the Board of Education who has fielded numerous constituent concerns around food insecurity and the meal shaming practices that occur within our public schools, and second, and certainly more personally, as a Maryland public school system graduate who has, himself, fallen victim to the meal shaming practices that, decades later, still occur within our schools.

I am subscribed to the conviction that our state's children, the students of our school systems, regardless of what zip code they arrive to our schools from, need not worry about the level of funds their parent(s)/guardian(s) may have placed on their accounts or the embarrassment and bullying that occurs when classmates see a meal taken from them, discarded, and then handed the well known, but highly degrading, "Shame Sandwich" - a cheese or peanut butter and jelly sandwich. It is also my belief that our school system staff members should not have to budget, whether through the school's funding or their personal pockets, for ways to reduce the times students end up with a large enough fiscal deficit on their accounts that a meal is publicly taken away from them.

The General Assembly must see a child's hunger as just as big of a barrier to academic excellence as is the absence of any other required educational tool. A student's empty stomach is just as dangerous to their success in school as is a student's empty mind and we, **by policy and morality**, must provide the necessary support to feed both.

I appreciate the committee's consideration of this legislation and urge a favorable report.

Communities:

Camp Springs
District Heights
Forestville
Morningside
Suitland
Upper Marlboro
Westphalia

Secretary-Treasurer
Monica E. Goldson, Ed.D.

ADMINISTRATION

Chief Executive Officer
Monica E. Goldson, Ed.D.
Telephone: 301-952-6008

Submitted, individually, and with great respect,

K. Alexander Wallace
Board Member, District 7

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide a great education that empowers all students and contributes to thriving communities.

Prince George's County Public Schools