

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 628

Primary and Secondary Education - Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

House Ways and Means Committee

February 22, 2023

Good Afternoon. My name is Mary Klatko, and I am the Legislative Chairperson for the Maryland School Nutrition Association. I am here today to express our strong support for HB 628.

This legislation's purpose is to provide healthy, nutritious school breakfast and lunch to all students in every grade in all schools in Maryland because no child can learn without good nutrition. When feeling hungry they lose concentration, and sadly many cannot afford to buy meals at school or even bring a sandwich from home.

Schools are trying to show students that they are equal, that they all receive the same support for their education, such as transportation, teachers, books, temperature-controlled classrooms, and ipads but most noticeably missing for too many is the benefit of nutritious meals. That's where our students are treated differently based on their family's socioeconomic situation, and that is not right or acceptable. We place students into the categories of paid, free or reduced price instead of based on accomplishments.

Maryland has been a national leader in combating childhood hunger for decades such as:

- In 1998 launching the free statewide school breakfast program known as Maryland Meals for Achievement
- In 2018 the Maryland Cares for Kids Act eliminated reduced price meal payments by students.

This state has demonstrated a commitment to student health time and again.

The federal government provided school meals free every day all during the pandemic to all students through our school system programs and then abruptly closed them this school year.

Many parents do not complete the application for free or reduced-price meals mostly due to embarrassment. Food and Nutrition Service Programs are accumulating debt at an astronomical rate. Five months into this school year, the statewide amount of debt for meals in Maryland is 1.7 million dollars. Where is that money to come from? The School Food and Nutrition Service Programs, with a few exceptions, are enterprise funds which means they are not part of the General Fund Operating Budget. They stand alone.

This bill is the answer to:

- the nutritional needs of our students, as well as
- support for the educational process, and
- financial balance for the Food & Nutrition Service Programs.

Current Research Reviews have found that Universal Free School Meals are associated with

- increased participation
- improved diet quality

- either no change or improved BMI (Body Mass Index)

Maryland is not alone in facing this need. The National Conference of State Legislatures reported last summer that 17 states have considered or passed legislation for Universal Free School Meals. In 2023, Montana and Washington, DC have begun to pursue this legislation along with Maryland.

We are very hopeful that you will see the value in supporting all Maryland students with a nutritious breakfast and lunch in school every day to give them:

- the opportunity to learn and succeed not only in school but in life as well and
- to grow healthy and strong through good nutrition

I have attached the following:

- USDA Meal Pattern Nutritional Requirements for School Breakfast and Lunch
- colorful page of what school meals look like
- 2022 State Legislative Summary

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. The Maryland School Nutrition Association urges your favorable support for HB 628.



School Breakfast Program Meal Pattern

	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Food Components	Amount of Food ^a per Week		
	(minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) ^{b c}	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^{b c}	0	0	0
Dark green	0	0	0
Red/Orange	0	0	0
Beans and peas (legumes)	0	0	0
Starchy	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Grains (oz eq) ^d	7-10 (1)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq) ^e	0	0	0
Fluid milk ^f (cups)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week			
Min-max calories (kcal) ^{g h}	350-500	400-550	450-600
Saturated fat (% of total calories) ^h	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Target 1 (mg)	≤ 540	≤ 600	≤ 640
<i>Trans</i> fat ^h	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving.		

^a Food items included in each group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is 1/8 cup.

^b One-quarter cup of dried fruit counts as 1/2 cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as 1/2 cup of vegetables. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.

^c Schools must offer 1 cup of fruit daily and 5 cups of fruit weekly. Vegetables may be substituted for fruits, but the first two cups per week of any such substitution must be from the dark green, red/orange, beans/peas (legumes), or “Other vegetables” subgroups, as defined in §210.10(c)(2)(iii) of this chapter.

^d At least 80 percent of grains offered weekly must meet the whole grain-rich criteria specified in FNS guidance, and the remaining grain items offered must be enriched. Schools may substitute 1 oz. eq. of meat/meat alternate for 1 oz. eq. of grains after the minimum daily grains requirement is met.

^e There is no meat/meat alternate requirement.

^f All fluid milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less). Milk may be unflavored or flavored, provided that unflavored milk is offered at each meal service.

^g The average daily calories for a 5-day school week must be within the range (at least the minimum and no more than the maximum values).

^h Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and sodium. Foods of minimal nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent milk fat are not allowed.

**National School Lunch Program Meal Pattern**

	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Food Components	Amount of Food ^a per Week		
	(minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) ^b	2½ (½)	2½ (½)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^b	3¾ (¾)	3¾ (¾)	5 (1)
Dark green ^c	½	½	½
Red/Orange ^c	¾	¾	1¼
Beans and peas (legumes) ^c	½	½	½
Starchy ^c	½	½	½
Other ^{c d}	½	½	¾
Additional Vegetables to Reach Total ^e	1	1	1½
Grains (oz eq) ^f	8-9 (1)	8-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Fluid milk (cups) ^g	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week			
Min-max calories (kcal) ^h	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated fat (% of total calories) ^h	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Interim Target 1 (mg) ^h	≤ 1,230	≤ 1,360	≤ 1,420
Sodium Interim Target 1A (mg) ^{h i}	≤ 1,110	≤ 1,225	≤ 1,280
<i>Trans</i> fat ^h	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving.		

^a Food items included in each group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is ⅛ cup.

^b One-quarter cup of dried fruit counts as ½ cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as ½ cup of vegetables. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.

^c Larger amounts of these vegetables may be served.

^d This category consists of “Other vegetables” as defined in paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(E) of this section. For the purposes of the NSLP, the “Other vegetables” requirement may be met with any

additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas (legumes) vegetable subgroups as defined in paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section.

^e Any vegetable subgroup may be offered to meet the total weekly vegetable requirement.

^f At least 80 percent of grains offered weekly must meet the whole grain-rich criteria specified in FNS guidance, and the remaining grain items offered must be enriched.

^g All fluid milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less). Milk may be flavored or unflavored, provided that unflavored milk is offered at each meal service.

^h Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and sodium. Foods of minimal nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent are not allowed.

ⁱ Sodium Interim Target 1A must be met no later than July 1, 2023 (SY 2023-2024).



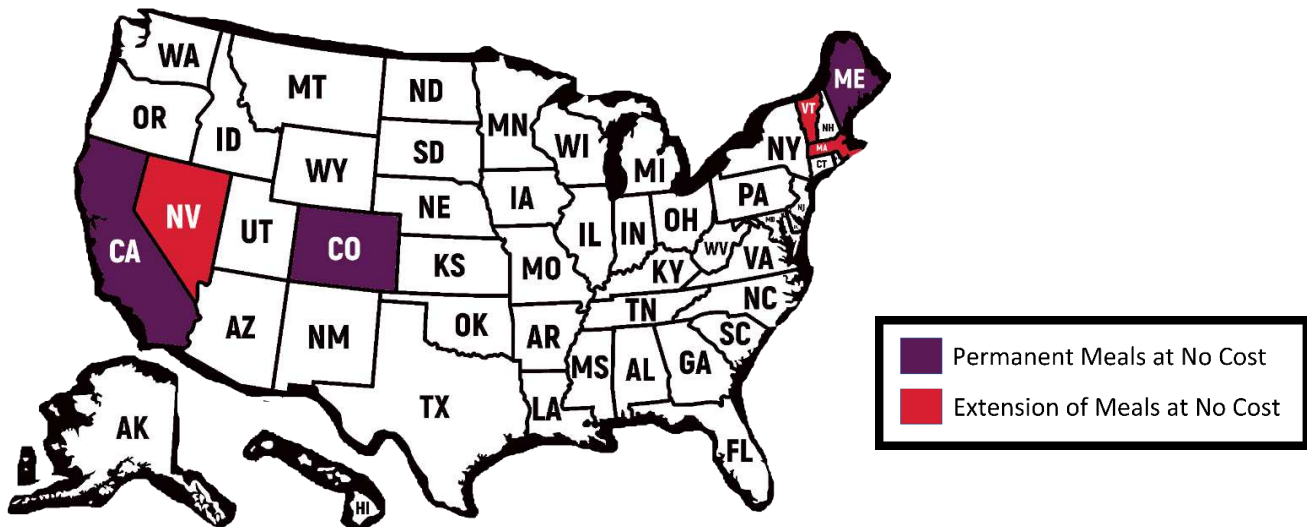


2022 STATE LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY: YEAR END REVIEW

This report is a summary of key school nutrition state legislation that changed status or was introduced between January 1 and December 31, 2022. Unpaid meal debt remains an issue in some states.

- 17 of the bills in this report have been signed into law.
- 3 states now offer school meals at no cost to students on a permanent basis.
 - California [AB 130](#)
 - Colorado [HB 1414](#)
 - Maine [LD 1679](#)
- 3 states have expanded access to school meals at no cost to students for SY 2022-2023.
 - Massachusetts [FY2023 Budget](#)
 - Nevada [The Nevada Legislature Interim Finance Committee](#) approved up to [\\$75 million of American Rescue Plan Act funds](#)
 - Vermont [S. 100](#)
- 8 state legislatures (PA, NJ, NY, NC, MN, TN, MO and SC) have legislation pending that would create free school meal programs. Please note the midterm elections might have an impact on legislative activity.

States With Permanent Meals and Extension of Meals at No Cost



SNA state advocacy resources are a collaborative effort intended to support grassroots efforts at the local level. We welcome your updates at advocacy@schoolnutrition.org.