



HB628 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION – BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAMS – UNIVERSAL EXPANSION

February 22, 2023
WAYS AND MEANS

SUPPORT

Grace Wilson, Legislative & Policy Specialist (410.440.1758)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports **HB628 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion**. This bill alters the standards of the State Free Feeding Program to require that beginning in fiscal year 2025, any student in a public school system receive either a federally approved school meal or a state funded free meal if the district participates in the United States Department of Agriculture’s School Meals Program. This bill also forbids school systems from charging a student for any portion of such a meal beginning in fiscal year 2025, and requires that the State reimburse the county boards of education for the student’s share of the meal. Further, the bill states that it is the intent of the General Assembly that the State, each county board, and participating nonpublic schools maximize the use of all available federal funds in carrying out the requirements of the State Free Feeding Program.

AACPS recognizes the importance of developing a healthy school environment which promotes student health, well-being, and the ability to learn. Healthy school environments meet nutrition standards and guidelines for food and beverages available on school campus in accordance with State and federal laws and regulations which promote food comprised of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein. Free and nutritious meals for all students allow them to stay fueled, ready to learn, and out of the school nurse’s office.

During the 2021-2022 school year, AACPS offered free school meals to all students and served 41,000 school lunches a day. Currently during the 2022-2023 school year, free school meals are no longer available to all students, and AACPS is serving 32,000 school lunches a day. Students who ate with us last year are choosing not to do so this school year. This bill would allow approximately 9,000 students to eat school meals again, free of charge, thus enabling them to better learn and succeed.

AACPS supports this bill that would provide free school meals to all students and ensures that all AACPS students are fueled and best prepared to engage in educational experiences. Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on HB628.