

SB425 - Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility

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Position: FAV

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 Temple Isaiah
 Zionist Organization of America
 Baltimore District

Written Testimony – Senate Bill 425
Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024
Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee – February 7, 2024
Support

Background: Senate Bill 425 would clarify that secondary schools participating in the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program may serve breakfast in any broadly accessible part of the school; and authorize elementary schools participating in the Program to serve breakfast in any broadly accessible part of the school, including from "Grab and Go" carts.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all of its agencies. This includes Jewish Community Services (JCS), which provides a plethora of social services to low-income Marylanders.

The concept of human dignity is well ingrained in Jewish teachings. We believe that all our neighbors deserve access to the basic resources of food, clothing, and shelter. Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast (MMFA) Program provides state funding to supplement federal meal reimbursements so that schools can offer breakfast in the classroom for all students at no charge. A school is eligible when at least 40 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

The MMFA Program makes it possible for schools to offer a nutritious school breakfast, with a proven track record of ensuring school breakfast reaches the students who need it most. By allowing for flexibility in the way the meals are distributed throughout the school, we are increasing accessibility and removing the burden of strict rules from our teachers and support staff.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Councils asks for a favorable report on SB425.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

SB 425 - Maryland Food Bank - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Anne Wallerstedt

Position: FAV

SB 425

Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program – Alterations (Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024) Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee February 7, 2024

SUPPORT

Senate Bill 425 enables flexibility for elementary schools to serve breakfast in any broadly accessible part of the school, including from “Grab and Go” carts, which is a flexibility already in place for middle and high schools.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that 1 in 3 Marylanders are at risk of food insecurity. A person who is food insecure does not have consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day, and this problem persists in every area of the state. There are also communities and populations who are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, including families with children and communities of color. The causes of food insecurity are complex and often include additional factors such as low income, lack of reliable transportation, and missing community resources such as grocery stores.

The economic stability of a child’s family should not dictate whether they are able to eat nutritious food every day, yet for too many Marylanders this is the reality. Last year, more than 1 in 3 Maryland families making less than \$35,000 a year were considered food insufficient. However, it is not just families in the lowest income bracket who are struggling. 35.5% of all Marylanders are finding it difficult to afford their basic household necessities – including food, and more alarming is that more than 1 in 3 Maryland families report that their children are not eating enough because food is unaffordable.

The Maryland Food Bank sees firsthand the absolute beneficial impact of meals that are served while children are at schools or other safe community centers through our Supper Club, which served over 606,000 meals at 33 sites to children after school in FY 23, and our Summer Club, which served almost 69,000 meals at 38 sites to children during the summer of 2023. Further, we operate food pantries at 189 K-12 schools across the state, where we distributed the equivalent of almost 2.5 million meals last year. The sheer magnitude of need is present in these programs, and the Maryland Food Bank knows that our efforts, while substantial, cannot alone solve child food insecurity in the state, as a crucial time of day for children to eat is missing – namely, breakfast.

Maryland has a real opportunity to equitably even the education field for thousands of students who may need their schools to provide them the only healthy meals their family can afford. By ensuring that schools who want to participate in the MMFA program can provide breakfast to students in the way that makes the most practical sense – whether in the classroom or “grab-and-go,” it removes any stigma that might be perceived and ensures that all children start the day with the same foundation of nutritious foods that can fuel their learning.

The Maryland Food Bank appreciates your consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 425.

2024 Testimony in Support - SB425.pdf

Uploaded by: Ayesha Holmes

Position: FAV

Senator Brian J. Feldman
Education, Energy and the Environment
Favorable: SB425

Ayesha B. Holmes, Director
No Kid Hungry, Maryland
aholmes@strength.org

TESTIMONY in SUPPORT – SB425

Maryland Meals for Achievement – Alterations (Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024)

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024 (SB425). As Director of the No Kid Hungry Maryland Campaign, I have witnessed the vital role that school breakfast plays in the health, wellbeing, and ultimate success of kids throughout our state. MMFA began in 1998 with just six pilot schools, the Maryland Meals for Achievement program (MMFA) now reaches kids in over 600 schools, located in high-poverty areas, providing Breakfast After the Bell to all students at no cost. MMFA's success has enabled thousands of kids to start their school days with a full belly, ready to learn. By passing SB425, you can provide schools with the added flexibility they need to reach even more kids.

Through the No Kid Hungry Maryland campaign, we have seen the positive impact of MMFA as we work with partners, lawmakers, educators, and businesses to identify and eliminate the barriers that may prevent children and families from accessing healthy and nutritious meals. Approximately 1 in 8 children in Maryland could face hunger this year, and programs like MMFA, which increase access to school breakfast play a critical role in reducing food insecurity for children and families.

The changes outlined in SB425 are budget neutral and would make the MMFA program more flexible to meet the specific needs of each school instead of a one size fits all method on elementary schools. This change is in line with what currently exists in middle and high schools.

The bill allows schools to implement an in-classroom or Grab and Go model, both of which allow students the opportunity to consume meals in the classroom after the bell.

Research shows that when kids start the day hungry, it is harder to focus in class. Test scores are lower, and students are more likely to miss class time because they are in the nurse's office with headaches or stomach aches. For these kids, school breakfast is critical. The traditional method of serving the meal before the school day starts, however, can be ineffective. As a result, only a fraction of the students who may need this meal are able to access it.

On behalf of No Kid Hungry Maryland and families across our state, I encourage you to support SB425 so that more students can start the school day ready to learn.

Testimony Cody SB 425.pdf

Uploaded by: Cody Wilt

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 425

**Maryland Meals For Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program -
Alterations Maryland Meals For Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024**

Senate Education, Energy and the Environment

February 5, 2024

Good afternoon, Chairman Feldman, Sponsor Hettleman and members of the committee.

My name is Cody Wilt. I am President of the Maryland School Nutrition Association, and I am here to express our association's strong support for Senate Bill 425.

There is a very small change to this Bill which we support. By we, I mean the members of Maryland School Nutrition Association. We surveyed all School Food and Nutrition Service Directors in the state, and they are 100% behind the proposed change.

It may be a small change, but it makes a big difference in the management and delivery of the School Breakfast Program in high poverty schools known as the Maryland Meals For Achievement Program.

In the middle and high schools in this program, the Bill allows schools to use multiple delivery systems such as in the classroom, in the cafeteria, or from grab and go carts at the entrance to the school as soon as the students get off the bus.

This Bill change allows us to have the same flexibility in types of service offered to the elementary schools.

This bill has no cost associated with it.

We strongly urge your support for SB 425. It will definitely provide alternatives and support for the Maryland Meals For Achievement Program.

Thank you for allowing us to testify on behalf of SB 425. We urge your support.

MD Catholic Conference_SB 425_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: FAV



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

February 7, 2024

SB 425

**Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program - Alterations
(Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024)**

Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 425. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government. We offer this testimony on behalf of the families of more than 50,000 students served by over 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland.

Senate Bill 425 would expand access for the Maryland Meals for Achievement Program (MMFA), which lends state support to afford schools with greater concentrations of low-income students the ability to provide breakfast to all students, free of charge. This bill would allow elementary schools, if approved, to exercise the same "grab-and-go" method of breakfast distribution as that afforded by high schools.

Several years ago, the state found that only 24% of eligible high schools were benefitting from the program due to the restrictions of the program not allowing for the on-the-go breakfast distribution. Thus, the General Assembly expanded access to the program by empowering high schools to serve breakfasts in any part of the school from "grab and go" carts post-student arrival. The Conference supported that legislation and now supports this legislation to ensure more elementary students avail themselves to the most important meal of the day, one they are all to often not provided at home.

Although Maryland is the wealthiest state in the country, one in eight children in Maryland face constant food insecurity. School breakfast and lunch programs are essential to not only ending hunger, but for improving the health and educational outcomes of students who live with food insecurity. Pope Francis has been very outspoken about the epidemic of food insecurity in our world. He recently stated, "I invite you to make space in your heart for this emergency of respecting the God-given rights of everyone to have access to adequate food. We share what we have in Christian charity with those who face numerous obstacles to satisfy such a basic need." He also invited "all of the institutions of the world, the Church, each of us, as one

single human family, to give a voice to all of those who suffer silently from hunger, so that this voice becomes a roar which can shake the world.” (*Message for The Campaign Against Global Hunger, December, 2013*)

Multiple Maryland Catholic schools serve hundreds of breakfasts every day to their students through the MMFA program, particularly at our predominantly low-income schools. Our school community recognizes the important role that breakfast plays in sustaining students throughout the day and maximizing their learning potential. Nutrition programs such as MMFA assist in Catholic schools’ goal of addressing the needs of the whole child and are an important resource for students whose families are unable to provide them enough to eat.

For all of the reasons stated herein, we support the effort to expand and insure the MMFA program presented through Senate Bill 425 and we request a favorable report.

FINAL AACPS SB425 MMFA SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Grace Wilson

Position: FAV



SB425 – MARYLAND MEALS FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN-CLASSROOM BREAKFAST PROGRAM – ALTERATIONS (MARYLAND MEALS FOR ACHIEVEMENT FLEXIBILITY ACT OF 2024)

February 7, 2024

EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

SUPPORT

Grace Wilson, Legislative & Policy Specialist (410.440.1758)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports **SB425 Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program – Alterations (Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024)**. This bill clarifies that the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program permits secondary schools to serve breakfast, including from “Grab and Go” carts, in a broadly accessible part of the school. Additionally, the bill allows elementary schools to serve breakfast in a broadly accessible part of the school, including “Grab and Go” carts, if approved by the State Department of Education and if students are allowed to consume the meal in the classroom after the start of the school day.

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 proteins. These State and federal requirements, in conjunction with locally developed and implemented policies, appropriately ensure that public schools meet the nutritional needs of students.

AACPS has historically participated in the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program. Currently, 65 AACPS schools participate in this program that has been credited with improving academics, behavior, and the well-being of students. AACPS supports the flexibility this bill provides to serve breakfast to elementary school students outside of the classroom, through initiatives such as “Grab and Go” breakfast. This change in law will allow AACPS to serve breakfast in the manner that best meets the needs of our students and our schools at the elementary level. This flexibility was previously only available at the secondary level. This change in program procedures at the elementary level will align the procedures for this program at all grade levels.

Furthermore, the bill eliminates the requirement that teachers serve meals in the classroom. Which in turn means AACPS does not have to provide training to teachers on how to serve meals in classrooms and removes additional staff from the procedures to ensure accountability for the meals claimed.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on SB425.

Testimony 2.7.24.pdf

Uploaded by: Jaime Hetzler

Position: FAV

Testimony in support of HB 0368 MMFA Flexibilities

Ms. Jaime L. Hetzler – Director, Baltimore County Public Schools

1/31/2024

Good afternoon. My name is Jaime Hetzler and I'm the Director of Food and Nutrition for Baltimore County Public Schools.

I'll start by describing the process that my team encounters, to serve breakfast in elementary schools according to the **current** requirements. In the afternoon, the day prior to service, they pack individual coolers with food in one cooler and milk in another. So, for an elementary school with 20 classrooms, that's 40 coolers. They are then placed into large, dedicated refrigerators with individual paperwork printed for each classroom. In the morning, they deliver two bags to each room. Many classrooms are upstairs or outside in trailers, which doesn't allow for the use of a cart. So, the heavy bags are individually carried. Later, they return and pick up all the coolers from each room. As you can see, this process requires additional equipment, time, and staff. We provide one selection for each classroom, hope to get our leftovers returned, and expect teachers to properly account for meals.

This year, with staffing shortages, challenges purchasing equipment, and rising inflation, this model was simply too cumbersome. At BCPS, we **dropped** the MMFA program in **all** elementary schools and moved to grab and go service. This model has been very successful. The students can choose from a variety of items. It has decreased waste, improved quality, allowed for hot entrée items daily, removed the burden from teachers, and **increased** participation.

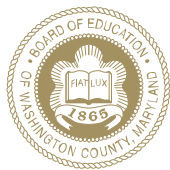
The grab and go service model still allows for students to eat in the classroom and breakfast after the bell. At BCPS, our participation in JUST the schools that went from in-classroom MMFA to grab and go, has increased 2.7% year to date. Our *district-wide* breakfast participation has **increased** 32% since last year. That's over **9 thousand** students per **day**. This year, we serve grab and go style in **100%** of our schools.

Thank you for your support in approving this bill.

SB 425 favorable 2-7-24.pdf

Uploaded by: Jamie Brown

Position: FAV



BILL: Senate Bill 425 / House Bill 386
TITLE: Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program-Alterations (Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024)
HEARING DATE: February 7, 2024 / January 31, 2024
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment / House Ways and Means
CONTACT: Mr. Steve Edwards, Deputy Communications Officer (301-766-8914)

The Washington County Board of Education supports House Bill 386, which would clarify that secondary schools participating in the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program may serve breakfast in any broadly accessible part of the school; authorize elementary schools participating in the Program, subject to certain approval and allowances, to serve breakfast in any broadly accessible part of the school, including from “Grab and Go” carts; and generally relating to the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program.

Research shows children who participate in school breakfast programs are less likely to experience food insecurity, are better able to learn, exhibit better behavior at school, demonstrate improved academic performance, and are less likely to be late or absent from school. Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) is a proud participant in the Maryland Meals for Achievement Program (MMFA) and, like other school districts in Maryland, would benefit from the flexibility proposed in the bill with regards to the manner in which schools could make breakfast available to students at schools participating in the MMFA.

Currently, 21 schools in Washington County participate in the MMFA in-classroom program with 12 additional schools participating in the MMFA modified program. Enabling schools to serve breakfast in any broadly accessible part of a school at both the elementary and secondary levels will enable school-level administrators to determine the best way to get breakfast into the hands of students while also reducing the staff time needed to distribute meals to individual classrooms thus saving valuable school resources.

While students will continue to be able to consume their meal in the classroom after the start of the school day with their peers, the flexibility proposed in the bill will allow teachers to remain focused on instruction instead of meal distribution and any distractions that may occur as meals are distributed in their classroom.

The Washington County Board of Education respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 386.

Thank you.

Cc: Washington County Board of Education Members
Washington County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly
Dr. David T. Sovine, Superintendent
Dr. Jennifer Webster, Associate Superintendent for Administration and Leadership
Dr. Garry Willow, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Mr. Jeffrey Proulx, Chief Operating Officer
Ms. Ilissa Ramm, Chief Legal Counsel
Mr. Michael Embley, Director of Food and Nutrition Services
Mr. John Woolums, Director of Governmental Relations, Maryland Association of Boards of Education
Ms. Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_SB0425.pdf

Uploaded by: John Olszewski

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

JENNIFER AIOSA
Director of Government Affairs

AMANDA KONTZ CARR
Legislative Officer

WILLIAM J. THORNE
Legislative Associate

BILL NO.: **SB 425**

TITLE: Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program – Alterations (Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024)

SPONSOR: Senator Shelly Hettleman

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 7, 2024

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 425 – Maryland Meals for Achievement In Classroom Breakfast Program – Alterations (Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024). If enacted, this legislation would provide needed flexibility to the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) In-Classroom Breakfast program for elementary schools. In-class breakfast as it stands includes a number of expenses- additional refrigeration, transport carts, and staffing. SB 425 would allow elementary schools to utilize a grab-and-go breakfast option, which is more efficient in both time and resources.

Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) did not participate in the MMFA in-classroom breakfast program for elementary schools because the associated expenses of in-classroom delivery are cost prohibitive. BCPS estimates that approximately 90 elementary schools could be eligible for \$500,000 annually, if they participated in the program. Now that BCPS is offering universal school meals, having the flexibility to participate in the in-classroom breakfast program for elementary schools in a cost-effective manner would make it more sustainable for BCPS to continue offering universal meals in the future.

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 425. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.

SB 426. Nonpublic School STEM Teacher Funding.pdf

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: FAV

BILL: Senate Bill 426
TITLE: Education - Maryland STEM Program - Established
DATE: February 7, 2024
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 426 because it would establish a new state-funded program for staffing instructional programs provided in nonpublic schools.

This bill would establish the Maryland STEM Program in the Maryland State Department to Education (MSDE) to provide additional compensation to a current or retired public school teacher to teach science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) classes at nonpublic schools. MABE does not doubt that there is a shortage of STEM teachers in private schools, because public schools are certainly experiencing the same phenomena. However, Maryland's constitutional mandate is for the Governor and legislature to establish and fund a thorough and efficient statewide system of free public schools. These public schools, 1,400 across 24 local school systems, are engaged in the transformative changes called for by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. MABE opposes the expansion or creation of new state funding obligations to support nonpublic schools as proposed in Senate Bill 426 as Maryland is confronting forecasted fiscal challenges to sustain the Blueprint.

MABE greatly appreciates the State's commitment to enact the Blueprint and fund major systemic changes in the delivery of prekindergarten, the preparation of all students to be college and career ready, and significant salary increases and improvements in working conditions for teachers. But the Blueprint is still in its early stages of implementation, and the challenges to fulfill all of the Blueprint's promises are daunting. One of the most pressing challenges is to secure the state and local funding to increase staffing levels and sustain salary increases for teachers, principals, counselors, nurses, custodians, bus drivers, and the many other dedicated educational and support staff working in public schools.

MABE supports parental choice among the many public and non-public schools in the State. Maryland enjoys a wide array of educational opportunities for all of its students, including an outstanding public education system. Within the public school system, charter schools opportunities continue to grow. Outside the public schools, opportunities include parochial and non-sectarian private schools as well as home instruction. Local boards of education appreciate the important role that this mix of public and non-public schools plays throughout the state and in local communities. However, MABE believes that legislation goes too far when it proposes to create a state funded program to support the salaries of teachers at nonpublic schools. Again, MABE opposes Senate Bill 426 because it would inappropriately divert state funding, and the professional services of MSDE staff, away from public education and the mission to support Blueprint implementation.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 426.

SB425FSPTA.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Stewart

Position: FAV

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland Senate
Education, Energy, and the Environment - Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024
- Policies SB425
February 7, 2024
SUPPORT**

Free State PTA represents over 70,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is composed of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. ***Senate Bill 425, Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024, aligns with Free State PTA's principle for legislative action which states that schools must provide a safe environment where all students, teachers and staff can thrive.***

Free State PTA's¹ and the National PTA² supports universal free meals for children. This bill will potentially increase breakfast participation³ in elementary schools by offering the flexibility of Grab and Go meals at schools that qualify for the Maryland Meals for Achievement. This free breakfast program now serves 588 schools in Maryland. Allowing elementary schools to deliver meals in different areas in their building will maximize the number of children receiving breakfast, which has been shown to increase cognitive function.⁴ This bill's fiscal note shows that this change will not have a significant impact on the current costs.

Free State PTA believes this bill is vital in ensuring the wellbeing of children attending school and therefore, strongly urges that this committee issues a **favorable report on SB425**. Ellie Mitchell and Rick Tyler, of the Maryland Education Coalition, also join this testimony.

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

Gerrod Tyler, President
GTyler@fspta.org

¹ https://www.fspta.org/_files/ugd/d2f0e2_a663d6f6c6ad49a2aab4bc9c095c494f.pdf

² [Improving School Meals Program - Position Statement | National PTA](#)

³ https://let.umn.edu/sites/let.umn.edu/files/2022-10/policy_brief_2.pdf

⁴ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8859144/>

Testimony Mary SB 425.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Klatko

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 425

Maryland Meals For Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program - Alterations Maryland Meals For Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024

Senate Education, Energy and the Environment

February 7, 2024

Good afternoon, Chairman Feldman, Sponsor Hettleman and members of the committee.

My name is Mary Klatko. I am Legislative Co-Chair of the Maryland School Nutrition Association, and I am here to express our association's strong support for Senate Bill 425.

There is a very small change to this Bill which we support. By we, I mean the members of Maryland School Nutrition Association. We surveyed all School Food and Nutrition Service Directors in the state, and they are 100% behind the proposed change.

It may be a small change, but it makes a big difference in the management and delivery of the School Breakfast Program in high poverty schools known as the Maryland Meals For Achievement Program.

In the middle and high schools in this program, the Bill allows schools to use multiple delivery systems such as in the classroom, in the cafeteria, or from grab and go carts at the entrance to the school as soon as the students get off the bus.

This Bill change allows us to have the same flexibility in types of service offered to the elementary schools.

This bill has no cost associated with it.

We strongly urge your support for SB 425. It will definitely provide alternatives and support for the Maryland Meals For Achievement Program.

Thank you for allowing us to testify on behalf of SB 425. We urge your support.

SB0425_FAV_Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

Uploaded by: Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

Position: FAV



"Cultivating a collaborative, sustainable, and equitable food system for all Maryland communities."

February 6, 2024
2024 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY
SB0425: Maryland Meals for Achievement

BILL: SB0425: Maryland Meals for Achievement
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
POSITION: Testimony of Support of Senate Bill 0425

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record in support of Senate Bill 0425.

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council. The Food System Resiliency Council was established by the Maryland General Assembly during the 2021 legislative session to bring together 33 appointed council members from across the state, all with different points of entry and expertise to work toward a more resilient food system and address the food insecurity crisis due to COVID-19.

The Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) program provides state funding to supplement federal meal reimbursements so that schools can offer breakfast in the classroom for all students who qualify at no charge. Schools that have at least 40 percent of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals are eligible. School administrators credit the MMFA with improving students' test scores, behavior, attendance, and wellbeing, and parents praise the program for assisting children to prepare for their academic day¹. In addition, research demonstrates that students participating in the Maryland Meals for Achievement program have better educational performance, improved health, and decreased disciplinary problems².

This program was expanded in the last legislative session, and the increased flexibility provided through this legislation will ensure program sustainability and increased student access. Thank you for the opportunity to share our support of SB 0425.

Michael J. Wilson

Co-Chair, Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

¹ MSDE. "[Maryland Meals for Achievement.](https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/programs/SchoolandCommunityNutrition/Pages/about.aspx)"

<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/programs/SchoolandCommunityNutrition/Pages/about.aspx>

² No Kid Hungry, "[Maryland Meals for Achievement report](https://state.nokidhungry.org/maryland/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/11/MMFA-1page-2019.pdf)"

<https://state.nokidhungry.org/maryland/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/11/MMFA-1page-2019.pdf>

SB0425_FAV_Montgomery County Food Council .pdf

Uploaded by: Michelle Caruso

Position: FAV



February 5, 2024

**2024 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY
SBo425: Maryland Meals for Achievement**

BILL: SBo425: Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program Alterations (Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024)

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

POSITION: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0425

BILL ANALYSIS: Clarifying that secondary schools participating in the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program may serve breakfast in any broadly accessible part of the school; and authorizing elementary schools participating in the Program, subject to certain approval and allowances, to serve breakfast in any broadly accessible part of the school, including from "Grab and Go" carts.

Dear Chair Feldman and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

The Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC) urges you to **SUPPORT** the increased flexibility for the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program, a vital program in ensuring Maryland students have access to nutritious breakfast in the classroom.

The Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) program provides state funding to supplement federal meal reimbursements so that schools can offer breakfast in the classroom for all students who qualify at no charge. Schools that have at least 40 percent of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals are eligible. School administrators credit the MMFA with improving students' test scores, behavior, attendance, and wellbeing, and parents praise the program for assisting children to prepare for their academic day¹. In addition, research demonstrates that students participating in the Maryland Meals for Achievement program have better educational performance, improved health, and

¹ MSDE. "[Maryland Meals for Achievement.](https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/programs/SchoolandCommunityNutrition/Pages/about.aspx)"

<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/programs/SchoolandCommunityNutrition/Pages/about.aspx>



decreased disciplinary problems².

Increasing flexibility around breakfast options will continue to bolster this key program which has proven to be an important resource for schools throughout Maryland. The continued strengthening of this program has proven to be hugely beneficial to students across the state. Increasing the flexibility within the program will allow schools to provide more options for Maryland students. **For these reasons, the Montgomery County Food Council supports SBo425 and urges a FAVORABLE REPORT for this bill.**

The Montgomery County Food Council is a nonprofit organization that serves as the primary connection point for businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and residents around food system issues in our County. We bring together over 2,000 local and regional partners in community-wide education, advocacy, and capacity building initiatives. Our work cultivates a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable local food system by enhancing food access for the over 100,000 at risk for hunger, expanding food education opportunities for all residents, supporting our County's farms and food and beverage businesses, and addressing the impact of local food production, distribution, consumption and recycling on our natural resources

For more information, please contact Michelle Caruso, Director of Policy and Partnerships, at the email and phone number below.

² No Kid Hungry, "[Maryland Meals for Achievement report](https://state.nokidhungry.org/maryland/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/11/MMFA-1page-2019.pdf)"

<https://state.nokidhungry.org/maryland/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/11/MMFA-1page-2019.pdf>



SB425 - Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Riya Gupta

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of
Senate Bill 425: Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program -
Alterations (Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024)**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

February 7, 2024

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. We advocate for legislative and regulatory policy changes to further educational equity and build the technical capacity of everyday Marylanders to hold state and local officials accountable to their responsibilities. **Strong Schools Maryland stands in support of Senate Bill 425** in order to "fortify the future".

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a world-class system of public schools for our state's students. We are making record-breaking investments in education and resources to support students for educational excellence. Through community school expansions and concentration of poverty grants, the Blueprint provides support and services that address the needs of children in communities with high poverty rates, high crime rates, and those that lack access to adequate health care and social services, with resources provided at the school level and in the community. SB 425 reflects these ideals by increasing funding for the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program.

Maryland currently leads the country in starting students' days off right through the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) program. According to Maryland Hunger Solutions, in the 2022-2023 school year, 581 schools are participating in MMFA, which is up from 485 in the 2018-2019 school year.¹ Participating schools in the program have seen higher breakfast participation, improved student attendance, and improved student behavior

Hungry students are more likely to score lower on standardized tests, repeat a grade, be suspended from school, get sick more often, and be hospitalized more frequently.² Maryland has now begun automatically adding students under Medicaid coverage to the free or reduced-price school lunches program. This new criteria of eligibility has identified a large blindspot in our counting of students in poverty. **We have been missing 1 in 9 students.**³

¹ [Maryland Hunger Solutions](#)

² [No Kid Hungry](#)

³ [DLS 2023 Fiscal Briefing](#)

Appropriating more funds to the Maryland Meals for Achievement program will help expand access for Maryland students to receive the most important meal of the day.

Now more than ever, we must affirm our commitment to Maryland students and our educational investments through the Blueprint. Senate Bill 425 grants additional funds to our thriving MMFA program and sets students up for continuous success at the start of every day.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 425.

For more information, contact Riya Gupta at riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org

SB425_Hettleman_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Shelly Hettleman

Position: FAV

SHELLY HETTLEMAN
Legislative District 11
Baltimore County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children, Youth,
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Joint Committee on the Chesapeake
and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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The Senate of Maryland ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN SB425 MARYLAND MEALS FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN-CLASSROOM BREAKFAST PROGRAM - ALTERATIONS (MARYLAND MEALS FOR ACHIEVEMENT FLEXIBILITY ACT OF 2024)

Far too many children face food insecurity in the U.S. One in eight children in Maryland face hunger, according to Feeding America. Maryland has been a leading state in addressing this crisis by creating the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program, which provides breakfast to all students in schools where at least 40% of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals for the federal program.

In its current form, the program allows food to be served in any broadly accessible part of the school in middle and high schools, but not in elementary schools. For elementary school kids who may arrive late to school, this restriction can limit their access to free breakfast. This bill would enable local decision-makers to provide access to breakfast through services like Grab and Go carts, rather than being restricted to food service in the classroom. My home school district, Baltimore County, has asked for this added flexibility to fully realize the incredible impact of this program.

In 2023, the Maryland General Assembly passed a bill expanding the budget of this program, in recognition of its importance in ensuring that no child goes hungry. The Breakfast Program allows kids and teachers to focus on learning, gets food to kids in families experiencing food insecurity at home and serves over 258,000 Maryland students, according to No Kid Hungry.

We all were reminded about the importance of in-school meal programs during the COVID-19 pandemic, when those services were interrupted, putting kids at risk of not receiving any of the meals their families had relied on to keep their heads above water. We must do what we can to protect and expand these services. This is especially true as the cost of food continues to rise. The positive impact of the program is clear: schools enrolled in Maryland Meals for Achievement have better educational performance, improved health and a decrease in discipline problems. Providing Breakfast After the Bell has increased breakfast participation and consumption and thereby enhanced the impact of this important program.

We owe it to all our students to do everything we can to get them fed, including allowing food service in any broadly accessible part of school. Ultimately, we want to reach as many kids in need as possible with the resources this state has already committed.

MD Hunger Solutions - Informational for SB 425 - M

Uploaded by: Julia Gross

Position: INFO



INFORMATIONAL TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 425

Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program - Alterations (Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act of 2024)

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 7, 2024

SB 425 aims to provide additional flexibilities to schools participating in the Maryland Meals for Achievement Program by allowing participating elementary schools the opportunity to serve breakfast after the bell in any broadly accessible part of the school.

Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) is a longstanding state-funded program that allows schools with 40 percent or higher free and reduced-price meal enrollment to serve school breakfast at no cost to all of their students in the classroom or through another after the bell model, such as “grab and go” or second chance breakfast.

The National School Breakfast Program is a critical tool in combatting childhood hunger. Decades of research show that children who participate in school breakfast are less likely to experience food insecurity, demonstrate improved academic performance, consume a healthier overall diet, and are less likely to be late to or absent from school.¹

Despite these important benefits, the School Breakfast Program fails to reach many of the low-income students who need it most. During the 2019-2020 school year, only 62.1 low-income Maryland students participated in the School Breakfast Program for every 100 low-income students who participated in the National School Lunch Program.²

This is because in many schools, school breakfast is served in the cafeteria before the school day begins. As a result, students miss out on school breakfast due to transportation issues like incompatible bus or family schedules. In addition to the timing of meal service, the cost of the meal and stigma associated with the program also often prevent students from participating.

Since its creation in 1998, MMFA has succeeded in increasing access to and participation in the School Breakfast Program by targeting and removing these main barriers. By providing state funds to allow schools to serve breakfast to all students at no cost, MMFA removes the barrier of cost and eliminates stigma by making the program available to all students regardless of economic status. Additionally, requirements around implementing breakfast in the classroom or an alternative breakfast after the bell service model ensure breakfast is more accessible and integrated into the school day.

For these reasons, Maryland Hunger Solutions appreciates the opportunity to inform the conversation around SB 425. We welcome the opportunity to work with legislators, the Maryland State Department of Education, and local school districts to encourage best practices in expanding access and participation in the school breakfast program.

¹ Food Research and Action Center, Breakfast for Learning (Available at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/breakfastforlearning-1.pdf>) and Breakfast for Health (Available at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/breakfastforhealth-1.pdf>).

² Maryland Hunger Solutions, 2020 Maryland School Breakfast Report (Available at <https://www.mdhungersolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/MDHS-Breakfast-Report-2021.pdf>).