

**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's<sup>1</sup> and the National PTA<sup>2</sup> supports universal free meals for children. This bill will potentially increase breakfast participation<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.fspta.org/\\_files/ugd/d2f0e2\\_a663d6f6c6ad49a2aab4bc9c095c494f.pdf](https://www.fspta.org/_files/ugd/d2f0e2_a663d6f6c6ad49a2aab4bc9c095c494f.pdf)

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

<sup>3</sup> [https://let.umn.edu/sites/let.umn.edu/files/2022-10/policy\\_brief\\_2.pdf](https://let.umn.edu/sites/let.umn.edu/files/2022-10/policy_brief_2.pdf)

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