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TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 183 – Human Services - Food Supplement Program (Summer SNAP for Children Act)

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) supports House Bill (HB) 183.

Among other things, HB 183 authorizes the Department of Human Services to use certain funding to provide matching funds to counties to supplement federal nutrition benefits for families with children age 18 and under during the months when their children are not in school. Many Baltimore City families rely on City Schools to ensure their children are getting the food they need, with 31,820 Baltimore children considered “food insecure,” meaning they do not have enough to eat and are uncertain where their next meal will come from.ⁱ The supplemental funding authorized by this bill would provide critical additional funds to Maryland families so they can buy healthy food.

More than 28% of Baltimore City children live in “healthy food priority areas” (previously referred to as “food deserts”).ⁱⁱ While the National School Lunch Program provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free lunches each school day, families – especially those living in healthy food priority areas – struggle to find, much less afford, nutritious meals for their children when schools are not in session. When healthy options are not affordable, families have no choice but to rely on the less expensive food options available to them, which tend to be high in sodium, saturated fat, and sugar.ⁱⁱⁱ This poor nutrition can lead to children being under or over-weight, both of which are highly associated with weaker immune systems and greater potential for poor health outcomes such as hypertension, diabetes, and asthma. Better nutrition would be a boon for Baltimore City children, one-third of whom are either overweight or obese, and 20 percent of whom are diagnosed with asthma.^{iv,v} Good nutrition is also associated with improved mood, better sleep, and even better brain functioning.^{vi} Not only would this bill help families get enough to eat – it would help keep children healthier year-round.

For the above reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 183.

ⁱ Feeding America. (2021). Food Insecurity among Child (<18 years) Population in Baltimore city County. Retrieved from <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/child/maryland/county/baltimore-city>

ⁱⁱ Baltimore City Department of Planning. (2018). Baltimore City's Food Environment Report: 2018. Retrieved from <https://clf.jhsph.edu/sites/default/files/2019-01/baltimore-city-food-environment-2018-report.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Kern, D. M., Auchincloss, A. H., Stehr, M. F., Roux, A. V. D., Moore, L. V., Kanter, G. P., & Robinson, L. F. (2017). Neighborhood Prices of Healthier and Unhealthier Foods and Associations with Diet Quality: Evidence from the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 14(11), 1394. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14111394>

^{iv} Baltimore City Health Department. (n.d.). ReThinkYourDrink. Retrieved from <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sugar-sweetened-beverages>

^v The Abell Foundation. (2020). Pediatric Asthma. Retrieved from <https://abell.org/publication/pediatric-asthma/#:~:text=The%20report%20finds%20that%20an,asthma%20symptoms%20and%20improve%20their>

^{vi} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). Childhood Nutrition Facts. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/nutrition/facts.htm>