



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

Ways & Means Committee

Position: Favorable

March 20, 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. **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 the accessibility of school lunches. The proposed legislation would allow elementary schools to serve breakfast in any broadly accessible part of the school, including carts.

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 Increasing the physical availability of breakfast will help expand access for Maryland students to receive the most important meal of the day. According to the National Institutes of Health, greater physical accessibility of breakfast, including grab and go meal options, help support students

¹ [Maryland Hunger Solutions](#)

² [No Kid Hungry](#)

who would otherwise miss breakfast and this increased accessibility is associated with increased student achievement and attendance.³

Now more than ever, we must affirm our commitment to Maryland students and our educational investments through the Blueprint. Senate Bill 425 increases this critical program's accessibility and therefore 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 Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org

³ [Increased School Breakfast Participation from Policy and Program Innovation: The Community Eligibility Provision and Breakfast after the Bell, 2022](#)