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BILL: SB 579

TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion Report

DATE: March 27, 2024

POSITION: Favorable

COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents’ Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 579.

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to report to the General Assembly on the cost to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students in public schools in the State by December 1, 2024. MSDE must consider the following for each county in determining the cost, including the current rate of providing free breakfast and lunch through (1) Maryland Meals for Achievement; and (2) participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Community Eligibility Program (CEP). Also, in determining the cost, specified data by county must be considered and must be disaggregated by (1) elementary, middle, and high school; and (2) breakfast and lunch.

PSSAM supports this legislation as a hopeful precursor to a future universal State-funded breakfast and lunch program. Based on our experiences during Covid in feeding students and families, we are extremely confident that all twenty-four local school systems will be able to implement such an ambitious program effectively and efficiently; however, local funding would not be able to support such an expansion. Hopefully, this report will help create a roadmap for funding and implementing such a program in the future.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 579 and urges a **favorable** report.