

March 20, 2024

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbearry
Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB 425 - Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom
Breakfast Program - Alterations (Maryland Meals for Achievement Flexibility Act
of 2024) - POSITION: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Atterbearry and members of the Ways and Means Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide favorable testimony for SB 425. With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, we empower Marylanders to reach their full potential by providing preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to workforce development and career opportunities. The Family Investment Administration within DHS administers various safety net programs to support families across Maryland. The children we serve through our programs will directly benefit from SB 425.

The bill amends the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program to allow elementary schools to serve breakfast in non-traditional cafeteria space through "Grab and Go" carts at schools in neighborhoods experiencing high rates of poverty. By increasing access to free, nutritious morning meals, the legislation directly supports our mission to support households to ensure no child goes hungry. Senate Bill 425 aligns with our legislative priorities this session as demonstrated by HB 183/SB 213, which seeks to provide summer food assistance to children unable to access free and reduced price school meals during the summer school break.

Research shows us that children who are at nutritional risk had significantly poorer attendance. Senate Bill 425 will boost participation within the in-school breakfast program among the children we serve. Eliminating barriers like restrictive serving methods would advance our collective efforts to combat food insecurity and provide a



foundation for success.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide favorable testimony to the Committee and urge a favorable report on SB 425. We look forward to the decision of the Committee and welcome continued collaboration.

If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at rachel.sledge@maryland.gov.

In service,



Rafael López
Secretary