



## **INFORMATIONAL TESTIMONY ON SB 579**

### **Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion**

*House Ways and Means Committee*

March 27, 2024

Maryland Hunger Solutions, established in 2007 as an initiative of the Food Research & Action Center, is a statewide, non-partisan, nonprofit organization working to promote and advocate for long-term and sustainable solutions to eliminate food insecurity for all Maryland's residents.

Over the past 17 years, we have closely partnered with the legislature and policymakers across the state to work toward meaningful policy changes that overcome barriers to state and federal child nutrition programs and create self-sustaining connections between Maryland families and nutritious foods.

As a result of this work and the legislature's continued dedication to improving the lives of Maryland's children, our state has made incredible progress in expanding access to school nutrition programs. As a state, we have paved the way for 651 schools to serve school meals at no cost with the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) by passing the Hunger-Free Schools Act in 2015. We have made numerous expansions to the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program, which is currently used to serve breakfast after the bell at no cost to all students in 588 schools. We have also strengthened school meal debt policies to eliminate meal shaming practices and eliminated the reduced-price copay for over 30,000 students from low-income households with the Maryland Cares for Kids Act of 2018.

This year, SB 579 aimed to take another monumental step forward towards ending childhood hunger and poverty by ensuring that all Maryland students had access to the healthy school meals they need to grow and thrive during the school day, regardless of their economic status.

Unfortunately, the amendment being proposed removes the opportunity to provide critical support to Maryland families and children in favor of delaying this progress by an additional year with a study.

While we appreciate the opportunity for more information to be gathered and provided to policymakers, we respectfully do not recognize this amendment as taking any meaningful steps towards supporting our state's school meal programs or the success of our students.



Decades of research already exist demonstrating the critical role school meals play in reducing food insecurity, supporting educational achievement, and promoting health outcomes for children, including studies conducted here in Maryland. Additionally, numerous research and reports have been published within just the past 5 years outlining the benefits of providing school meals at no cost as well as [lessons learned from states that have passed similar legislation](#) and best practices for implementation. We have included a sampling of this available data and research below for your convenience.

While this study may help to bring much needed attention to this issue, it will not provide any additional meals for students who have fallen through the cracks or prevent any families who are struggling to make ends meet from accruing burdensome school meal debt in the upcoming school year.

Hungry kids can't wait. We cannot delay progress towards ending childhood hunger and poverty for another year. While we are providing informational testimony as opposed to oppositional, given the existing body of evidence, Maryland Hunger Solutions does not favor legislation requiring a study at this time.

Thank you for the opportunity to inform the conversation around SB 579 and the proposed study amendment. We welcome the opportunity to partner with legislators to find alternative solutions that provide meaningful support to Maryland children and families.

### Publicly available school meals data published by Maryland State Department of Education:

- [Free and reduced-price meal data](#) across all Maryland schools, which includes:
  - Student enrollment data by district any by school
  - Free and reduced-price enrollment percentages by district and by school
  - Districtwide Identified Student Percentage (with and without 1.6 multiplier)
  - Individual school Identified Student Percentage (with and without 1.6 multiplier)
  - Participation in the Community Eligibility Provision by district and by school
- [Maryland Meals for Achievement participation list](#) by district:

### Universal school meal research from Maryland:

- Gross, S.M., Kelley, T.L., Augustyn, M., Wilson, M.J., Bassarab, K., and Palmer, A. (2019). Household food security status of families with children attending schools that participate in the community eligibility provision (CEP) and those with children attending schools that are CEP-eligible, but not participating. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*. 2019 October; doi: [10.1080/19320248.2019.1679318](https://doi.org/10.1080/19320248.2019.1679318).
- Hecht, A., Neff, R., Kelley, T., & Pollack Porter, K. (2021). Universal free schools meals through the Community Eligibility Provision: Maryland food service provider perspectives. In *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* (pp. 1–22). Lyson Center for Civic Agriculture and Food Systems. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2021.102.033>

### Nationwide research on the benefits of school meal participation:

- **Improved academic performance:**

Anzman-Frasca, S., Djang, H. C., Halmo, M. M., Dolan, P. R., & Economos, C. D. (2015). Estimating impacts of a breakfast in the classroom program on school outcomes. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 169(1), 71–77. doi: [10.1001/jamapediatrics.2014.2042](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2014.2042).

Basch CE. Breakfast and the achievement gap among urban minority youth. *J Sch Health*. 2011 Oct;81(10):635-40. doi: [10.1111/j.1746-1561.2011.00638.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2011.00638.x). PMID: [21923876](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21923876/).

Frisvold, D. E. (2015). Nutrition and cognitive achievement: an evaluation of the School Breakfast Program. *Journal of Public Economics*, 124:91-104. doi: [10.1016/j.jpubeco.2014.12.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2014.12.003). PMID: 25918449; [PMCID: PMC4408552](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25918449/).

Gordon, N. E., & Ruffini, K. J. (2018). School nutrition and student discipline: effects of schoolwide free meals. [NBER Working Paper, 24986](https://www.nber.org/papers/w24986).

Hinrichs, P. (2010). The Effects of the National School Lunch Program on Education and Health. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 29(3), 479–505.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40802085>

Imberman, S. A., & Kugler, A. D. (2014). The effect of providing breakfast in class on student performance. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 33(3), 669–699. DOI [10.3386/w17720](https://doi.org/10.3386/w17720).

Murphy, J. M. (2007). Breakfast and Learning: An Updated Review. *Journal of Current Nutrition and Food Science*, 1, 3-36. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2174/1573401310703010003>.

Murphy, J. M., Pagano, M. E., Nachmani, J., Sperling, P., Kane, S., & Kleinman, R. E. (1998). The relationship of school breakfast to psychosocial and academic functioning: cross-sectional and longitudinal observations in an inner-city school sample. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 152(9), 899–907. doi:[10.1001/archpedi.152.9.899](https://doi.org/10.1001/archpedi.152.9.899).

Nutrition Consortium of NYS. (2005). *Academics & Breakfast Connection Pilot: Final Report on New York’s Classroom Breakfast Project*. Albany, NY: Nutrition Consortium of NYS.

- **Reduced levels of food insecurity and poverty:**

Arteaga, I., & Heflin, C. (2014). Participation in the National School Lunch Program and food security: an analysis of transitions into kindergarten. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 47(3), 224–230.

Bartfeld, J., Kim, M., Ryu, J. H., & Ahn, H. (2009). The School Breakfast Program participation and impacts. Contractor and Cooperator Report, 54. Washington, DC: [U.S. Department of Agriculture](https://www.fda.gov/oc/ohrt/ohrt-report-54).

Bartfeld, J. S., & Ahn, H. M. (2011). The School Breakfast Program strengthens household food security among low-income households with elementary school children. *Journal of Nutrition*, 141(3), 470–475. DOI: [10.3945/jn.110.130823](https://doi.org/10.3945/jn.110.130823).

Bartfeld, J. S., & Ryu, J. H. (2011). The School Breakfast Program and breakfast skipping among Wisconsin elementary school children. *Social Service Review*, 85(4), 619–634.

Bublitz, M. G., Du, K. M., Hansen, J., Miller, E. G., & Peracchio, L. A. (2023). Ending Hunger: How COVID-19 Revealed a Path to Food Access for All. In *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research* (Vol. 8, Issue 2, pp. 207–219). University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.1086/723743>

Fletcher, J. M., & Frisvold, D. E. (2017). The relationship between the School Breakfast Program and food insecurity. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 51(3), 481–500. DOI: [10.1111/joca.12163](https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.12163).

Gundersen, C., Kreider, B., & Pepper, J. (2012). The impact of the National School Lunch Program on child health: a nonparametric bounds analysis. *Journal of Econometrics*, 166, 79–91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconom.2011.06.007>

Huang, J., Barnidge, E., & Kim, Y. (2015). Children receiving free or reduced-price school lunch have higher food insufficiency rates in summer. *Journal of Nutrition*, 145(9), 2161–2168. DOI: [10.3945/jn.115.214486](https://doi.org/10.3945/jn.115.214486).

Huang, J., & Barnidge, E. (2016). Low-income children's participation in the National School Lunch Program and household food insufficiency. *Social Science & Medicine*, 150, 8–14. DOI: [10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.12.020](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.12.020).

Nalty, C., Sharkey, J., & Dean, W. (2013). School-based nutrition programs are associated with reduced child food insecurity over time among Mexican origin mother-child dyads in Texas Border Colonias. *Journal of Nutrition*, 143, 708–713. DOI: [10.3945/jn.112.168757](https://doi.org/10.3945/jn.112.168757),

Nord, M., & Romig, K. (2006). Hunger in the summer: seasonal food insecurity and the National School Lunch and Summer Food Service programs. *Journal of Children and Poverty*, 12(2), 141–158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10796120600879582>.

- **Improved diet quality and nutritional intake:**

Au, L. E., Gurzo, K., Gosliner, W., Webb, K. L., Crawford, P. B., & Ritchie, L. D. (2018). Eating school meals daily is associated with healthier dietary intakes: The Healthy Communities Study. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics*, 118(8), 1474–1481. DOI: [10.1016/j.jand.2018.01.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2018.01.010).

Caruso, M. L., & Cullen, K. W. (2015). Quality and cost of student lunches brought from home. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 169(1), 86–90. [doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2014.2220](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2014.2220)

Clark, M. A., & Fox, M. K. (2009). Nutritional quality of the diets of U.S. public school children and the role of the school meal programs. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 109(2 Supplement 1), S44–S56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2008.10.060>.

Condon, E. M., Crepinsek, M. K., & Fox, M. K. (2009). School meals: types of foods offered to and consumed by children at lunch and breakfast. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 109(2 Supplement 1), S67–S78. DOI: [10.1016/j.jada.2008.10.062](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2008.10.062).

Crepinsek, M. K., Singh, A., Bernstein, L. S., & McLaughlin, J. E. (2006). Dietary effects of universal-free school breakfast: finding from the evaluation of the School Breakfast Program Pilot Project. *Journal American Dietetic Association*, 106(11), 1796–1803. DOI: [10.1016/j.jada.2006.08.013](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2006.08.013).

Farris, A. R., Misyak, S., Duffey, K. J., Davis, G. C., Hosig, K., Atzaba-Poria, N., McFerren, M. M., & Serrano, E. L. (2014). Nutritional comparison of packed and school lunches in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children following the implementation of the 2012–2013

National School Lunch Program standards. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 46(6), 621–626. DOI: [10.1016/j.jneb.2014.07.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2014.07.007)

Fox, M. K., & Gearan, E. (2019). *School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study: Summary of Findings*. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

Frisvold, D., & Price, J. (2019). The contribution of the school environment to the overall food environment experienced by children. *Southern Economic Journal*, published online ahead of print. <https://doi.org/10.1002/soej.12371>.

Hanson, K. L., & Olson, C. M. (2013). School meals participation and weekday dietary quality were associated after controlling for weekend eating among U.S. school children aged 6 to 17 years. *Journal of Nutrition*, 143, 714–721. DOI: [10/3945/jn/112/170548](https://doi.org/10.3945/jn.112.170548).

Hecht, A. A., Dunn, C. G., Kinsey, E. W., Read, M. A., Levi, R., Richardson, A. S., Hager, E. R., & Seligman, H. K. (2022). Estimates of the Nutritional Impact of Non-Participation in the National School Lunch Program during COVID-19 School Closures. In *Nutrients* (Vol. 14, Issue 7, p. 1387). MDPI AG. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu14071387>

Hubbard, K. L., Must, A., Eliasziw, M., Folta, S. C., & Goldberg, J. (2014). What's in children's backpacks: foods brought from home. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 114(9), 1424–1431. DOI: [10.1016/j.jand.2014.05.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2014.05.010).

Polonsky, H. M., Davey, A., Bauer, K. W., Foster, G. D., Sherman, S., Abel, M. L., Dale, L. C., & Fisher, J. O. (2018). Breakfast quality varies by location among low-income ethnically diverse children in public urban schools. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 50(2), 190–197. DOI: [10.1016/j.jneb.2017.09.009](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2017.09.009).

Ritchie, L. D., Rosen, N. J., Fenton, K., Au, L. E., Goldstein, L. H., & Shimada, T. (2015). School breakfast policy is associated with dietary intake of fourth- and fifth-grade students. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 116(3), 449–457. <https://doi.org/10/1016/j.jand.2015.08.020>.

Vernarelli, J. A., & O'Brien, B. (2017). A vote for school lunches: school lunches provide superior nutrient quality than lunches obtained from other sources in a nationally representative sample of US children. *Nutrients*, 9(9), E924. DOI: [10.3390/nu9090924](https://doi.org/10.3390/nu9090924).

- **Improved health outcomes (including reduction in obesity, anxiety, and depression):**

Gleason, P. M., & Dodd, A. H. (2009). School breakfast program but not school lunch program participation is associated with lower body mass index. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 109(2 Supplement 1), S118–S128. DOI: [10.1016/j.jada.2008.10.058](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2008.10.058).

Gundersen, C., Kreider, B., & Pepper, J. (2012). The impact of the National School Lunch Program on child health: a nonparametric bounds analysis. *Journal of Econometrics*, 166, 79–91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconom.2011.06.007>.

Kleinman, R. E., Hall, S., Green, H., Korzec-Ramirez, D., Patton, K., Pagano, M. E., & Murphy, J. M. (2002). Diet, breakfast, and academic performance in children. *Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism*, 46(Supplement 1), 24–30. <https://doi.org/10.1159/000066399>.

Millimet, D. L., Tchernis, R., & Husain, M. (2010). School nutrition programs and the incidence of childhood obesity. *Journal of Human Resources*, 45(3), 640–654. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.45.3.640>.

Millimet, D. L., & Tchernis, R. (2013). Estimation of treatment effects without an exclusion restriction: with an application to the analysis of the School Breakfast Program. *Journal of Applied Economics*, 28, 982–1017. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jae.2286>.

Murphy, J. M., Pagano, M. E., Nachmani, J., Sperling, P., Kane, S., & Kleinman, R. E. (1998). The relationship of school breakfast to psychosocial and academic functioning: cross-sectional and longitudinal observations in an inner-city school sample. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 152(9), 899–907. DOI: [10.1001/archpedi.152.9.899](https://doi.org/10.1001/archpedi.152.9.899).

Wang, S., Schwartz, M. B., Shebi, F. M., Read, M., Henderson, K. E., & Ickovics, J. R. (2017). School breakfast and body mass index: a longitudinal observational study of middle school students. *Pediatric Obesity*, 2(3), 213–220. DOI: [10.1111/ijpo.12127](https://doi.org/10.1111/ijpo.12127).

## **Research on the benefits of providing school meals at no cost to all students:**

- **Improved school meal participation with the Community Eligibility Provision:**

Andreyeva, T., & Sun, X. (2021). Universal School Meals in the US: What Can We Learn from the Community Eligibility Provision? In *Nutrients* (Vol. 13, Issue 8, p. 2634). MDPI AG. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13082634>

Levin, M., & Neuberger, Z. (2013). [Community Eligibility: Making High-Poverty Schools Hunger Free](#). Washington, DC: Food Research & Action Center and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Logan, C. W., Connor, P., Harvill, E. L., Harkness, J., Nisar, H., Checkoway, A., Peck, L. R., Shivji, A., Bein, E., Levin, M., & Enver, A. (2014). *Community Eligibility Provision Evaluation*. Prepared by Abt Associates for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

Maurice, A., Rosso, R., FitzSimons, C., & Furtado, K. (2019). Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools (School Year 2018–2019). Available at: <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/community-eligibility-key-to-hungerfree-schools-sy-2018-2019.pdf>.

Schneider, K. R., Oslund, J., & Liu, T. (2021). Impact of the community eligibility provision program on school meal participation in Texas. In *Public Health Nutrition* (Vol. 24, Issue 18, pp. 6534–6542). Cambridge University Press (CUP).  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s1368980021003712>

- **Improved school breakfast participation with universal meals**

Anzman-Frasca, S., Djang, H. C., Halmo, M. M., Dolan, P. R., & Economos, C. D. (2015). Estimating impacts of a breakfast in the classroom program on school outcomes. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 169(1), 71–77. DOI: [10.1001/jamapediatrics.2014.2042](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2014.2042)

Bernstein, L. S., McLaughlin, J. E., Crepinsek, M. K., & Daft, L. M. (2004). Evaluation of the School Breakfast Program Pilot Project: final report. Nutrition Assistance Program Report Series, CN-04-SBP. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation. Retrieved from:  
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED486532.pdf>

Bullock, S. L., Dawson-McClure, S., Truesdale, K. P., Ward, D. S., Aiello, A. E., & Ammerman, A. S. (2022). Associations between a Universal Free Breakfast Policy and School Breakfast Program Participation, School Attendance, and Weight Status: A District-Wide Analysis. In *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (Vol. 19, Issue 7, p. 3749). MDPI AG. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19073749>

Corcoran, S. P., Elbel, B., & Schwartz, A. E. (2016). The effect of breakfast in the classroom on obesity and academic performance: evidence from New York City. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 35(3), 509–532.

Farris, A. R., Roy, M., Serrano, E. L., & Misyak, S. (2019). Impact of Breakfast in the Classroom on participation and food waste. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 51(7), 893–898. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2019.04.015>

Ferris, D., Jabbari, J., Chun, Y., & Sandoval, J. S. O. (2022). Increased School Breakfast Participation from Policy and Program Innovation: The Community Eligibility Provision and Breakfast after the Bell. In *Nutrients* (Vol. 14, Issue 3, p. 511). MDPI AG.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/nu14030511>

Murphy, J. M., Pagano, M. E., Nachmani, J., Sperling, P., Kane, S., & Kleinman, R. E. (1998). The relationship of school breakfast to psychosocial and academic functioning: cross-sectional and longitudinal observations in an inner-city school sample. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med*. 152(9):899-907. doi: 10.1001/archpedi.152.9.899. [PMID: 9743037](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9743037/).



Nanney MS, Olaleye TM, Wang Q, Motyka E, Klund-Schubert J. (2011). A pilot study to expand the school breakfast program in one middle school. *Transl Behav Med.* 1(3):436-442. doi: 10.1007/s13142-011-0068-5. PMID: 22308175; [PMCID: PMC3269782](#).

Soldavini, J., & Ammerman, A. S. (2019). Serving Breakfast Free to All Students and Type of Breakfast Serving Model Are Associated with Participation in the School Breakfast Program. In *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* (Vol. 119, Issue 7, pp. 1142–1149). Elsevier BV. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2019.03.001>

- **Improved student attendance with the Community Eligibility Provision**

Bartfeld, J. S., Berger, L., & Men, F. (2020). Universal Access to Free School Meals through the Community Eligibility Provision Is Associated with Better Attendance for Low-Income Elementary School Students in Wisconsin. In *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* (Vol. 120, Issue 2, pp. 210–218). Elsevier BV. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2019.07.022>

- **Increased equity with Healthy School Meals for All**

Bean, M. K., Adams, E. L., & Buscemi, J. (2023). Free Healthy School Meals for All as a Means to Advance Child Health Equity. In *JAMA Pediatrics* (Vol. 177, Issue 8, p. 753). American Medical Association (AMA). <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2023.1955>

Fleischhacker, S., & Campbell, E. (2020). Ensuring Equitable Access to School Meals. In *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* (Vol. 120, Issue 5, pp. 893–897). Elsevier BV. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2020.03.006>

Harper, K., Bode, B., Gupta, K., Terhaar, A., Baltaci, A., Asada, Y., & Lane, H. (2023). Challenges and Opportunities for Equity in US School Meal Programs: A Scoping Review of Qualitative Literature Regarding the COVID-19 Emergency. In *Nutrients* (Vol. 15, Issue 17, p. 3738). MDPI AG. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu15173738>