

January, 2020

Dear Members of the General Assembly,

During the summer, hundreds of thousands of Maryland students lose access to the free and reduced-price meals they rely on during the school year. This is what makes the free Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) such an important tool in the effort to eliminate childhood hunger.

In the past, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) had issued certain nationwide regulation waivers that permitted summer meal sponsors flexibilities in order to ensure a more cost-effective and sustainable model for SFSP. In October of 2018, USDA rescinded 6 waivers outlined in the USDA [memo SFSP 01-2019](#), requiring state agencies or individual sponsors to submit requests in order to continue using them in summer 2019.

The rescinded policy waivers are listed below:

1. [SFSP 12-2011](#), Waiver of first-week site visits for returning sites that operated successfully during the previous summer and had no serious deficiency findings.
2. [SP 07-2013, SFSP 04-2013](#), Waiver of first-week site visits for School Food Authority sponsors in good standing in SFSP.
3. [SP 06-2014, SFSP 06-2014, CACFP03-2014](#), Waiver requirement for SFSP and Seamless Summer Option sponsors in good standing in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and National School Lunch Program, to conduct site visits during the first week of program operations.
4. [SP 10-2017, SFSP 06-2017](#), Policy extending Offer Versus Serve (OVS) to non-SFA sponsors.
5. [SP 10-2017, SFSP 06-2017](#), Waiver of meal-time requirements (three hours must elapse between the beginning of one meal service and the beginning of another meal service; four hours must elapse between lunch and supper if no snack is served) but maintaining that sponsors must continue to establish meal service times.
6. *Policy Extending area eligibility to closed enrolled sites*

Because these longstanding waivers have already been integrated into sponsors' programming, advocates, sponsors, and community members previously joined together to request that Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) submit a state-wide waiver request on behalf of all SFSP sponsors for summer 2019. However, MSDE decided to not submit waiver requests, making Maryland one of very few states in the country and the only state in the Mid-Atlantic region to not do so.

This decision left sponsors responsible for submitting individual requests. Unfortunately, due to limited capacity, most of Maryland's sponsors were unable to submit these requests and were forced implement program changes in order to continue serving meals. Because of this, many sponsors experienced adverse impacts to their programs in summer 2019, which included: increased administrative cost due to the need for additional staff support, the loss of site eligibility, inability to serve multiple programs in one site, and an overall decrease in breakfasts and suppers served.

Despite these impacts, MSDE has indicated that they will once again not request these waivers for summer 2020.



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

Delegate Marc Korman (Montgomery County) and Senator Cory McCray (Baltimore City) are submitting legislation which will require MSDE to submit statewide waiver requests on behalf of all Maryland sponsors, ensuring that the SFSP operates efficiently and effectively. This bill will have no fiscal note, and it would reduce duplicative administrative efforts by MSDE and USDA in reviewing individual sponsor's waiver applications.

Please help us ensure the continued success of the summer food service program in Maryland in providing children with healthy summer meals.

Sincerely,

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Public Justice Center

Health Care for the Homeless

Manna Food Center

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Montgomery County Food Council

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Out of School Time Network

Critical Issues Forum

Maryland Family Network

Capital Area Food Bank

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Maryland State Education Association