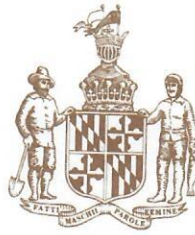


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March 15, 2022

SB971 - SUPPORT

Education - Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program- School Lunch

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

SB971 requires schools that receive a per pupil grant under the Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program to provide a free school lunch and breakfast to all pupils.

In 2019, about one in 10 Marylanders¹ and 1 in 8 children lived below the poverty line.² In that same school year, however, only half of Maryland's 24 school districts met the national goal for providing school breakfasts for those who were eligible.³ We need to do better.

Poverty leads to financial constraints and to insufficient and/or poor nutrition. SB971 seeks to reduce the disparities in the academic and physical development of children from lower income homes in line with the BluePrint by providing both consistent and nutritious meals that are known to have positive benefits on learning.⁴

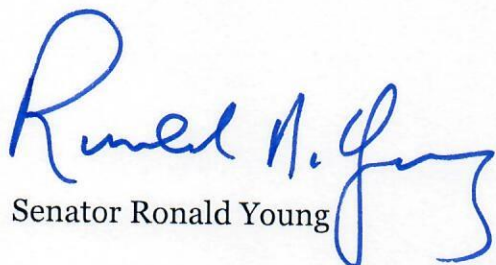
Children do not learn well when they are hungry. Without adequate energy from food, students may fall asleep in school or be unable to pay attention in classes.⁵ Malnutrition can also leave students susceptible to illness or lead to headaches and stomach aches, resulting in school absences.⁶ The brain develops rapidly at a young age and if it does not develop properly there can be long term effects on learning abilities and academic achievement.^{7,8,9}

Providing free healthy school meals for all Maryland children has successfully occurred through the pandemic federal waivers but these waivers will expire in the summer. SB971 will extend this funding through SY 2022-2023 and in high poverty community schools permanently.

Critically, SB 971 assures that all children in an eligible school, even those living above the poverty line, can benefit from consistent nutritious food. This eliminates the stigma of being singled out as needing a free or reduced-price school meal, and the problem of parents not receiving information on available meals.¹⁰ It helps low-income families to make ends meet. Since it is one system for a school, it also simplifies administrative processes, allowing principals and teachers to focus more on education.¹¹

I ask that you vote favorably on **SB971** to demonstrate that we are working to reduce the inequities of poverty and to enhance the development of children's minds and bodies by providing a nutritious breakfast and lunch.

Respectfully,



Senator Ronald Young

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SB0971/693926/1

AMENDMENTS
PREPARED
BY THE
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES

21 FEB 22
16:46:25

BY: Senator Young
(To be offered in the Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee)

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 971
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 2, before "**Lunch**" insert "**Breakfast and**"; in lines 4 and 6, in each instance, before "lunch" insert "**breakfast and**"; and in line 8, in each instance, after "school" insert "**breakfast and**".

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 3, in line 11, before "**LUNCH**" insert "**BREAKFAST AND**".

On page 5, in lines 3 and 5, in each instance, before "**LUNCH**" insert "**BREAKFAST AND**".