



**SB 121 – SUPPORT**

Ayesha B. Holmes

Share Our Strength – No Kid Hungry

[aholmes@strength.org](mailto:aholmes@strength.org) 410.205.1016

## **SB 121 SUPPORT**

### **Maryland Farms and Families Fund, Maryland Food and Agricultural Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program, and Maryland Farm-to-School Meal Grant Pilot Program – Alterations and Establishment**

Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

January 25th, 2022

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagen and Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Maryland campaign strongly supports SB 121 legislation, concerning the Maryland Farms and Families Fund, Maryland Food and Agriculture Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program, a Maryland Farm-to-School Grant Pilot Program.

No Kid Hungry Maryland is a campaign of national anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength. Since 2008, Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Maryland campaign has worked with partners, schools and advocates to end childhood hunger throughout the state.

One out of every six kids in Maryland is growing up in a family that struggles with hunger. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has only created more challenges to ensuring that every child in Maryland has enough food to eat each day. Through the impact of this legislation, we would see increase in access to nutritious, local sourced food for children through their school lunch.

No Kid Hungry works with our partners across the country to encourage healthy school meals. Through our work we know that farm to school pilot has been effective in many states. The model proposed in this legislation, for Maryland, reflects the best practices and lessons learned from other states, for successful implementation in Maryland. We believe that the school meal incentive of 20 cents per meal would be generous and competitive to other programs across the nation. We believe that this type of incentive structure, would encourage districts to incorporate fresher, **LOCALLY GROWN**, and healthy options in to meals for children.

I would be remiss, if I didn't highlight lessons learned about the need to build in resiliency in our food systems. The pandemic has hit schools hard with supply chain issues. By allowing schools to source food locally, some of those issues are mitigated. As we enter our 2<sup>nd</sup> full year of pandemic life, our children continue to need easy access to healthy, nutritious meals at school. We believe the Farm to School Grant program as well as other aspects of this legislation will build in the infrastructure to allow for consistency and resiliency for Maryland Schools.

We thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective and wish you a safe and successful Legislative Session.