



Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair  
Delegate Alonzo T. Washington, Vice Chair  
Ways and Means Committee  
House Office Building, Room 131  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Bill: House Bill 857 – Education – Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program – School Lunch**

**Position: Support**

Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic wellbeing of students and families across the state.

We know that students are best able to access education and learn when their basic needs are met, such as clothing, hunger, and shelter. The free and reduced lunch program helps to remove the barrier of hunger for students who qualify for the program. However, in order to qualify, parents must complete application forms that can appear complex and are not accessible for parents who do not speak English, or who may have disabilities themselves. Students who are hungry may not be able to access these services. Personally, I have bought snacks and food out of my own pocket for students whose parents did not return the forms and did not have money for lunch. I know that other educators do the same.

HB 857 would remove all barriers for students in areas with a high concentration of poverty accessing meals while in school, by providing free lunches to all students in the eligible schools. Students do not have to have the stigma of proving that they are eligible for a free lunch, and all parents are able to ensure that their child's basic needs are met.

MSPA is in support of House Bill 857 and we respectfully urge a favorable vote. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please feel free to contact us at [legislative@mSPAonline.org](mailto:legislative@mSPAonline.org).

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Phipps, M.Ed., Ed.S., NCSP  
Member, Legislative Committee  
Maryland School Psychologists' Association