

STATEMENT OF Kristen Ayres
before the
Maryland House Ways and Means Committee
January 27, 2022
Position: **FAVORABLE HB 154**

Chair Atterbeary and members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I'm the parent of two children in FCPS (Frederick County Public Schools) for the past 8 years. Students with severe food allergies and their families have to deal with a lot of uncertainty and stress. As a parent of one child with a life threatening allergy to nuts and a second child also allergic to nuts plus wheat and egg, I constantly worry about their safety at school. Without the policies the county instituted I would not feel safe sending them on the bus, on a field trip or into a classroom.

Schools can help to diminish that stress by adopting clear guidelines for management of severe food allergies. FCPS put such a policy in place over 7 years ago. My family is pleased with the high level of support FCPS provides to ensure the right care is available if an accidental exposure occurs. The FCPS policy on severe food allergies and the administration of forms and subsequent training has helped create a safer environment for our children. These forms, consistent and concise, make it easier for the teacher or staff person to quickly react in a way that will give the child the best chance of survival.

Every student's food allergies and medical plan in case of exposure to their allergen is different, but school districts can and should plan ahead by adopting a strong policy that lays the foundation for commonsense and needed protections for students. I hope that every public school district in Maryland takes action as Frederick has done.

House Bill 154 protects Maryland's school children and gives parents peace of mind by ensuring the collection and distribution of critical care information and appropriate standards at all Maryland schools.