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## MARYLAND ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS



**Date:** March 3, 2022

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

**Committee:** House Ways and Means Committee  
The Honorable Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary

**Position:** Support

The Maryland Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics represents about 1200 Registered and Licensed Dietitians/Nutritionists in the state. MAND appreciates the opportunity to comment on HB0112. Licensed Registered Dietitian/Nutritionists work in many different types of facilities from hospitals to schools, supermarkets to long term care facilities. Our mission is to educate the citizens of Maryland in the health implications of good nutrition with evidenced based information.

House Bill 857 states that eligible schools, that receive a per-pupil grant under the Concentration of Poverty Grant Program, provide free school lunches to each student who attends eligible schools. This bill prohibits a county board of education from charging students for school lunch. It also requires specific funding in the state budget to provide students with free school lunches.

Food insecurity disrupts food intake or eating patterns due to a lack of money or resources. Food insecurity among children has been associated with adverse health, social, and academic outcomes. Consequently, in 2015, 16.6% of households with children were classified as food insecure (adults, children, or both) in 7.8 percent of all families with children (1). The incidence of food insecurity increased during the Covid pandemic by 18%. Child nutrition programs improve diet quality, and academic performance for low-income and food-insecure households.

USDA school meal programs and other child nutrition programs improve food security. They do so by augmenting overall household resources and providing children with a regular source of nutritious meals. Understanding the role that school meal programs play in the dietary adequacy of children at risk for food insecurity helps assess program effectiveness. (2)

The Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recognizes that many of the populations we serve are at risk for food insecurity. The Academy's policy recommendations for healthy food systems and access includes Food Security.

Increasing access to affordable, healthy foods and safe water in communities, places of work, and schools, helps support efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to link healthy food to positive health outcomes (3)

For these reasons, we support the goals and aims of House Bill 857 and ask for a FAVORABLE report.

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References:

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2. Wolfson JA, Leung CW. Food insecurity and COVID-19: disparities in early effects for U.S. adults. *Nutrients*. 2020;12(6):1648. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu12061648> Crossref, Google Scholar
3. <https://files.constantcontact.com/9806343e601/e5179f65-55a9-4410-9435-68ae82770260.pdf>