

My name is Chelsi Lewis, and I am a member of the Client Leadership Council of the Capital Area Food Bank. My children and I have been living in Montgomery County, MD for 15 months now. I am a single parent of 3 children (my twins are Juniors in high school and my youngest is in his first year of middle school). I am here to express how important healthy meals in schools are to not only me and my family but to all families. I have battled with food insecurities for a very long time, and that was primarily due to me not earning a comfortable salary at the jobs I have had. I realized my barrier was not having a college degree, because we all know, having a college degree equates to higher salaries in the job market. That is why I am in college full time at Bowie State University, in Bowie, MD at this very moment, so that I can overcome the financial barriers that I have been faced with for years. I have had to depend on school breakfasts and lunches to feed my children and it is important for all children to receive healthy, tasty meals while attending school. I believe school meal programs are critical because they provide children with the nutrition they need to be able to thrive in school and out of school. A child that does not eat breakfast or lunch is unable to focus while in school. Who can focus on anything when they are hungry? Offering school meals to all students at no cost is a huge step toward ending childhood hunger. The passing of HB 857 matters wholeheartedly to me and it will give me the security of knowing my children are going to have healthy breakfasts and lunches 5 days a week.

I strongly encourage everyone to support HB 857 and I am confident that if this bill is passed, in the years to come, you will see the difference this bill can and will make on our children.

Again, my name is Chelsi Lewis and thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my story.