



STATEMENT OF FARE (Food Allergy Research and Education)
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:

On behalf of the approximately 27,500 Maryland public school students with life-threatening food allergies, [FARE](#) (Food Allergy Research and Education), the world's leading non-governmental organization engaged in food allergy advocacy and the largest private funder of food allergy research, strongly supports Delegate Palakovich Carr's legislation, HB 154 – Public Schools – Anaphylactic Food Allergies – Guidelines and Requirements. We appreciate her leadership and are grateful for her efforts to protect our state's children by updating the voluntary guidance issued to schools regarding managing food allergies in 2009 by the Maryland State Department of Education and the Department of Health.

Since that voluntary guidance was issued, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) found that over the past 20 years, the rates of children with food allergies has more than doubled and for children with a peanut or tree nut allergy, it has tripled. Life-threatening food allergies and the risk of fatal [anaphylaxis](#) are growing at an even faster rate among [Black and Asian-American children](#).

While food allergies are on the rise nationally, a [2021 study](#) found that children on Medicaid were less than one-tenth as likely as children on private health insurance to be diagnosed with a food allergy. This is especially troubling in Maryland as the Kaiser Family Foundation found in 2019 that [one in every three children in Maryland are on Medicaid](#).

As you might imagine, this combination of underdiagnosis coupled with the dramatic increase in food allergy prevalence makes our public schools the site of the majority of our children's anaphylactic attacks as a [2016 NIH study](#) reported with 25% of all attacks occurring in children with "no known food allergies." For the underdiagnosed and diagnosed children with life threatening food allergies, HB 154 provides a standard of care at our public schools to ensure that regardless of where our children call home in our great state – they are protected and can fully participate in all school functions.

HB 154 is a reasonable bill that sets appropriate standards for our state's county school districts while giving each school district the freedom to develop specific plans to meet the requirements. In addition, it will provide children, parents and caregivers with the information they need about what allergens are present in their school meals by posting menu information online. These allergens are the same ones that Marylanders will find labeled at grocery stores under [FALCPA \(Food Allergy Labeling and Consumer Protection Act\)](#) and we are grateful that Delegate Palakovich Carr included sesame which will begin being labeled on January 1, 2023.

House Bill 154 protects Maryland's school children by providing a critical, reasonable solution while addressing an unmet need. FARE asks for a favorable report.

Jason Linde
Senior Vice President, Government and Community Affairs

Contact: Jlinde@foodallergy.org