



Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy Vision: Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities



**HB 857 Education - Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program - School Lunch
Committee: Ways and Means
Date: 3/3/2022
Position: SUPPORT**

The Maryland Public Health Association appreciates the opportunity to submit this letter of support for HB 857. Access to healthy school lunches is a critical cornerstone to improving chronic health conditions and reducing educational inequities among young people (1). 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. In 2015, 16.6 percent of households with children were classified as food insecure (adults, children, or both) and in 7.8 percent of all families without children. The incidence of food insecurity increased during the COVID-19 pandemic by 18 percent. Studies have found that child nutrition programs improve diet quality and academic performance for low-income and food-insecure households. (2)

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 (3). Food insecurity, health disparities and education inequities are national issues that must be addressed. We urge a favorable report on HB857.

References:

1. Seligman HK, Lararia BA, Kushel MB. Food insecurity is associated with chronic disease among low-income NHANES participants. *J Nutr.* 2010;140(2):304-10. Available from: <http://doi.org/10.3945/jn.109.112573>
2. Katherine Ralston, Katie Treen, Alisha Coleman-Jensen, and Joanne Guthrie. Children's Food Security and USDA Child Nutrition Programs. United States Department of Agriculture. Summary. https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84003/eib-174_summary.pdf
3. 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>

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

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