

FAVORABLE

TO: House Economic Matters Committee, and members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Kobi Gyan

My name is Kobi Gyan, submitting this testimony in support of HB 514, the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program, which would ensure that Maryland would provide breakfast and lunch to all students attending low-income schools.

I am a member of Students to End Poverty, which is a student-run organization based in Montgomery County. Our mission is to advance policy on a state and local level that looks after the interests of lower-income Marylanders. We have advocated for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future bill, helped create the Maryland Student Investment Act, and supported Del. Solomon's affordable housing efforts.

Through these efforts, the importance of a quality K-12 education has become apparent. HB514 is a vital step towards creating an equitable playing field in Maryland.

In a structurally flawed educational system that puts low-income students at an academic disadvantage, no student should face further obstacles in the form of food insecurity. Maryland's school systems have the capacity to ease the burden placed on these students through providing all students with free breakfast and lunch. It is imperative that we take the action necessary to ensure all students are given the necessary opportunities to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

Being a student athlete, I understand the importance of starting the day off right with a meal. Moving through the long first 3 hours before lunch with an empty stomach can be a struggle, especially when rigorous courses require a student's 100% attention. Research has proven that hungry students are more likely to score lower on standardized tests than a student provided with adequate nutrients.

With the implementation of this bill underprivileged students won't have to go hungry throughout the school day. With less hungry students, test scores and grades in less wealthy areas will significantly increase. Hunger affects learning by curbing a student's development by inhibiting their ability to focus and perform, thus limiting their future achievements.

In light of these facts, I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB514.

Thank you,

Kobi Gyan
Sherwood High School
Students to End Poverty (STEP)