

My name is Kevyn Orr, and I am 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.

Although I do not attend school in Maryland, I do attend school with a free breakfast system. Coming to school on a full stomach each day allows me to take full advantage of the material presented to me. Likewise, having the peace of mind afforded by the security that if I did not eat breakfast I can get something to eat at school allows me to take full advantage of my time at school without incurring stress about how hungry I am, and how I will get my meal.

Education is the most important factor in escaping poverty and taking advantage of the plethora of opportunities available in Maryland and beyond. However, kids can't learn when they are on an empty stomach. By approving HB514 you are fighting for a brighter future for all Marylanders. One where regardless of the situation that we are born into we can still find access to necessities for life and education. Ask yourself where you would be without education. With HB514 more children than ever before will be able to take advantage of their education and forge a better path for themselves and Maryland.

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

Thank you,

Kevyn Orr
Sidwell Friends School
Students to End Poverty (STEP)