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SUMMARY



OUTLINE

Headings you add to the document will appear here.

February 8, 2023

FAVORABLE

TO: Members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Bennett Galper (Students to End Poverty)

My name is Bennett Galper, 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 by providing all students with free breakfast and lunch. It is imperative that we take action necessary to ensure all students are given the necessary opportunities to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

According to a study conducted by food assistance non-profit Feeding America, 543,650 Marylanders are facing hunger - 167, 020 of whom are children. Based on these statistics, 12.5% of kids in Maryland are facing food insecurity. As the average cost of a meal in Maryland is \$3.10, it would cost \$298,916,000 to meet the food needs of everyone facing hunger in Maryland, which the state can afford.

The impacts of food insecurity have detrimental effects on students' academics, and, in most low-income areas (where food insecurity rates are the highest), the schools already provide a poor income. Of the negative impacts of persistent hunger pertaining to academics, according to a study conducted by students at the University of Maryland, these are the most profound: poor GPAs (3.25 vs 3.47), missing class (18% vs 1.4%), failing class (12.6% vs 1.2%), and falling asleep in class (40.1% vs 2.7%). Based on these statistics, it is evident that food insecurity puts hungry students at a disadvantage in school, which widens the wealth divide in Maryland as it is harder for insecure students, who are

