

Meals for Kids Program Description:

- Main Idea:
 - This legislation allows all students attending low-income schools to participate in free breakfast in the classroom after the school bell in the morning.
- Specifics:
 - Increases the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program from \$7,550,000 to \$12,050,000.
 - Requires schools to provide free breakfast and free lunch to all students

Lobbying Options:

*We are on an extremely tight timeline

- Written and Oral Testimony (Everyone)

Template Written Testimony:

February 8, 2023

FAVORABLE

TO: Members of the House Economic Matters Committee_

FROM: _Advitha Shriharsha_____

My name is Advitha Shriharsha_____, 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.

In Maryland, 1 in 8 children face hunger. More than 200,000 children live in households where there is food insecurity. Along with that, there are significant differences by race and ethnicity of the students. Almost half of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students and 1 in 3 Black and Hispanic/Latino students are living in households with food insecurity. Compared to their white peers, students of color are at an 82-171% higher risk of food insecurity.

Food insecurity proposes many risks to the students affected. Poor health is the biggest one. Choosing healthy food options can be expensive, and to save money, food-insecure families could choose

cheaper, more processed, unhealthy food options which can lead to poor physical health in students. The mental health of students is also greatly affected due to food insecurity. They are more likely to indicate signs of stress, anxiety, and depression. With all of these factors, the performance of students in school could also decline. Hunger can affect learning, concentration, sleep, behavior and more in students. It can harm student's development, which can lead to many disadvantages especially in their education. All of these factors could put students in a major disadvantage in important things in life such as education just because they don't have consistent access to food in their household. Breakfast is an important meal, especially when you're a student. An improper breakfast in the morning significantly effects the student later throughout the school day. Students should have access to food for all meals, especially breakfast-and our schools can help out with this. HB 514 will also reduce the stigma around low-income students eating alone due to their meal plans, because this bill will provide breakfasts after the bell in the classrooms so that the students will be able to eat with their peers. HB 514 will reduce this food insecurity issue by providing free breakfasts to low-income students so that they are not at a disadvantage and are provided with this basic need in order to achieve and thrive like their peers.

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

Thank you,

Advitha Shriharsha
Northwest High School
Students to End Poverty (STEP)

[Finished example for SNAP for Students Bill \(2022\):](#)

- [Letter Writing Campaign](#)
- [In-person Lobby Day](#)