

### **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 23, 2023

FAVORABLE

TO: Members of the House Economic matters Committee.

FROM: Students To End Poverty (STEP)

My name is Advika 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.

Low income students are struggling with food insecurity. In our county, Montgomery County little over 30,000 kids are struggling with food insecurity. Food insecurity has been a big problem but it has gotten worse due to the recent inflation rates caused by COVID- 19. The pandemic has affected prices of many things including food, food prices have gone up 9.9%. It is even harder for low income families to afford these new high prices of food. During the pandemic, schools provided kids with food, but now nearly three years since the pandemic started, schools started to charge money for lunch, this impacted

low-income students and discouraged them from eating lunch. Schools also have always given free breakfast before the bell but sometimes kids can't wake up extra early just to get breakfast in school. This bill will help encourage schools to give free breakfast after the bell has rang so everyone can have access to breakfast. In Maryland, 1 in 8 children face hunger. That's 167,020 kids. If all low-income schools provide free breakfast it will help low-income families provide for their kids with basic necessities. Good food nutrition is a big factor in keeping children healthy. Food helps their bodies develop all the necessary functions they need. Without food there are many problems the child will develop, for example anxiety and depression which can impact their academic performance.

HB 514 will help Kids in Maryland get free breakfast to low-income students which is very important to ensure good health for students in our county.

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

Thank you,

Advika Shriharsha

Northwest high school

Students to End Poverty (STEP)

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

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