

The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 222
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3130 · 410-841-3130
800-492-7122 Ext. 3130
Fax 301-858-3053 · 410-841-3053
Jared.Solomon@house.state.md.us



JARED SOLOMON
Legislative District 18
Montgomery County

Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

Vice Chair, Education
and Economic Development

House Chair
Joint Audit and Evaluation
Committee

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB514 - Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program
Appropriation
February 28, 2023
Appropriations Committee

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, Esteemed Colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to present HB514 to end the waitlist for the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) In-Classroom Breakfast Program in our public schools.

As a former educator and current member of the MANNA Food Center Advocacy Taskforce, I am well aware of the growing crisis of childhood hunger. The economic and health challenges families face from the pandemic have resulted in unprecedented levels of food insecurity. The economic hardship has stretched family budgets in ways that jeopardize the health and welfare of their children. Far too many young people start each school day without breakfast, preventing them from growing, developing, or focusing on learning.

MMFA is one of Maryland's most important direct defenses against childhood hunger. For 24 years, MMFA has proven to be an effective program that allows high-poverty schools to provide Breakfast After the Bell to all students at no cost. Schools serve breakfast as part of the school day instead of before school starts. Eligible schools must have at least 40% of its students qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

Since 2018, the State of Maryland has supported the MMFA program with \$7.5 million annually, allowing 616 schools to participate in Breakfast After the Bell. This bill proposes an increased investment of \$4.5 million for MMFA to provide funding for all eligible Maryland schools wishing to participate in the program. The new investment would allow an additional 123 schools to participate, providing students access to a healthy breakfast in the classroom. The total cost to implement MMFA in Maryland for all eligible schools is \$12 million.

MMFA has a direct and positive impacts on our students. School breakfast has been shown to improve students' overall diets, enhance their ability to learn, promote school attendance, and decrease discipline issues. In MMFA schools, nearly 64% of free or reduced-priced eligible students participate in the school breakfast program, compared with 31% in other Maryland public schools. MMFA reduces stigma surrounding free and reduced price-programs by expanding breakfast access to all students at qualifying schools.

Thank you for your consideration, and I urge a favorable report.