



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 514

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

Maryland Hunger Solutions respectfully urges your support of SB 559 so that more high-poverty schools will have access to state funds to provide school breakfast after the bell at no cost to all their students.

HB 514 aims to fully fund Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA), which is an existing state-funded program that allows schools with 40 percent or higher free and reduced-price meal enrollment to serve school breakfast at no cost to all of their students in the classroom or through another after the bell model, such as “grab and go” or second chance breakfast.

The National School Breakfast Program a critical tool in combatting childhood hunger. Decades of research show that children who participate in school breakfast are less likely to experience food insecurity, demonstrate improved academic performance, consume a healthier overall diet, and are less likely to be late to or absent from school.¹

Despite these important benefits, the School Breakfast Program fails to reach many low-income students who need it most. In fact, during the 2019-2020 school year, only 62.1% of school lunch participants also participated in school breakfast.²

The reason for this is simple. In many schools, school breakfast is served in the cafeteria before the school day begins. As a result, many of the students miss out on school breakfast due to transportation issues like incompatible bus or family schedules. In addition to the timing of meal service, the cost of the meal and stigma associated with the program also often prevent students from participating.

Since its creation in 1998, MMFA has succeeded in increasing access to and participation in the School Breakfast Program by targeting and removing all three of these main barriers, ensuring that students are able to start their day well-nourished and ready to learn. Unfortunately, due to a lack of state funding, not every eligible school is currently able to participate in MMFA.

HB 514 will strengthen MMFA by providing the funding needed to allow all eligible schools to receive funds to serve breakfast after the bell at no cost to students and their families.

It’s time for the state to make this important investment in the health and academic success of Maryland children this upcoming school year and for years to come.

As such, Maryland Hunger Solutions urges a favorable report on HB 514. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Food Research and Action Center, Breakfast for Learning (Available at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/breakfastforlearning-1.pdf>) and Breakfast for Health (Available at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/breakfastforhealth-1.pdf>).

² Maryland Hunger Solutions, 2020 Maryland School Breakfast Report (Available at <https://www.mdhungersolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/MDHS-Breakfast-Report-2021.pdf>).