

FAVORABLE

TO: House Economic Matters Committee, and members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Andrew Papalia

My name is Andrew Papalia, 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.

Though I may not have lived in low-income areas throughout my childhood, I still saw the struggles involved with food insecurity in many of the people at all of the schools I have attended. Knowing quite a few of them personally, I know how much this program would not only make their lives better, but my life as their friend better as well.

Every student deserves the following: a happy home, a stable education, and food to eat.

Though all three of these things may seem to impact life in different ways, the first two can not happen without the last--food. A family that struggles to eat is not a happy one, and a malnourished student is at an academic disadvantage compared to their other peers. This program won't just help millions to eat, it will help millions to thrive and reach their full potential.

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

Thank you,

Andrew Papalia  
Sherwood High School  
Students to End Poverty (STEP)