



MARYLAND

HB0514 Testimony IN FAVOR  
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## House Appropriations Committee of the Maryland General Assembly

### Re: Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program - House Bill 0514

February 28, 2023

Chairman Barnes and Members of the Committee,

**No Kid Hungry Maryland writes in support of HB 0515 which proposes an increased investment of \$4.5 million to allow for all eligible schools to participate in the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program or MMFA.**

Through the No Kid Hungry Maryland campaign, we work with partners, lawmakers, educators, and businesses to identify and eliminate the barriers that may prevent children and families from accessing healthy and nutritious meals. In 2022, approximately 1 in 8 children in Maryland could face hunger this year, and programs like MMFA and school breakfast play a critical role in reducing food insecurity for children and Maryland families. However, in June 2022, our partners at the MD Food Bank report that in Maryland, roughly 50% of families, making less than \$35,000 are food insecure, and overall income brackets, almost 19% are facing food insecurity.<sup>1</sup> This data, tells us that a significant number of children in Maryland risk facing hunger this year. Programs like MMFA and school breakfast play a critical role in reducing food insecurity for children and Maryland families.

The policy outlined in HB 0514 is proven and effective. MMFA is an important tool with a proven track record across the state, but at current funding levels, there are more than 120 eligible schools that could benefit from MMFA left out of the program.

Research shows that when kids start the day hungry, it's harder to focus in class. Hunger can impact a child's ability to achieve. This shows up in lower test scores, lower attendance, and other negative outcomes. School Breakfast is critical to a child's health and academic success. The traditional method of serving the meal before the school day starts, however, can be ineffective. As a result, in Maryland, about 30% of children are able to take advantage of breakfast, when served before the start of the school day.

Breakfast After the Bell is a proven and effective strategy to make sure kids from low-income families can get the food they need to thrive. Making breakfast a part of the regular school day,

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<sup>1</sup> MFB-Strategy-Group-Research-Report-Food-Insecurity-in-Maryland.pdf



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just like lunch, has a powerful effect on kids. MMFA makes it possible for schools to serve breakfast in a manner is efficient and effective in increasing a child's ability to participate.

What started as a modest breakfast pilot project in 1998 with just six schools has grown to benefit more than 600 schools 24 years later. MMFA has had a lasting positive impact on students across the state, both in ending hunger and in academic achievement.

To be eligible for MMFA funding, a school must have at least 40% of its students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. MMFA enables these schools to offer all students school breakfast at no cost; it also helps schools shift the time they serve breakfast, serving it after the bell as part of the school day.

MMFA works! Nearly 64% of students in MMFA schools participate in the school breakfast program, compared with 31% of students in Maryland public schools that do not participate. Studies also show that students who eat breakfast after the bell demonstrate better educational performance, improved health, and a decrease in discipline problems.

An additional \$4.5 million over the next four fiscal years in the Maryland State Department of Education's Aid to Education Budget for MMFA would permit 100% of high-poverty schools not utilizing the federal Community Eligibility Program to participate by FY 2024.

It also makes economic sense for Maryland schools. An increase in participation due to MMFA investments could improve our schools' food and nutrition services budgets and provide a significant return on investment for the state.

No Kid Hungry Maryland encourages the Appropriations Committee to favorably report out on HB 0514, so that more students can start the school day ready to learn.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. Should you have any questions, or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 410-205-1016 or at [aholmes@strength.org](mailto:aholmes@strength.org).

With Gratitude,

**Ayesha B. Holmes**  
**Maryland Director**  
**No Kid Hungry**