

# **SB557 - Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfas**

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Position: FAV

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**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**Senate Bill 557 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch  
Programs – Universal Expansion**

**Budget and Taxation Committee – February 22, 2023**

**SUPPORT**

**Background:** SB557 would alter the standards of the State Free Feeding Program, beginning in fiscal year 2025, to require that if a school participates in the federal School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch Program, then each student in the school must be offered a meal at no cost to the student.

**Written Comments:** The concept of human dignity is well ingrained in Jewish teachings. We believe that all of our neighbors deserve access to the basic resources of food, clothing, and shelter. The School Breakfast and Lunch Program provides funding that makes it possible for schools to offer a nutritious school breakfast and lunch, regardless of a parent's income. Schools receive Federal funds for each breakfast served, and additional funds are provided to schools for each meal served to children who qualify, because of family income, for free or reduced-price meals.

By expanding the program beginning in FY25 and ensuring that the State will cover the remaining cost of meals outside of what the federal programs provide, we are ensuring that students who are in need of nutritious meals will be able to obtain them while at school going forward.

**With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of SB557.**

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies, and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*

**agudah testimony - sb 557- meals program- FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alan Lencz

Position: FAV



**SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE**

**FEBRUARY 22, 2023**

**SENATE BILL 557**

**PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION – BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAMS – UNIVERSAL  
EXPANSION**

**TESTIMONY OF AVI LENCZ**

**ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, AGUDATH ISRAEL OF MARYLAND**

**SUPPORT**

Agudath Israel of Maryland speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland, and on behalf of the 10,000 students attending 30 Jewish day schools in our great state.

Food insecurity has become increasingly salient in discussions regarding improving the lot of vulnerable Marylanders. Food insecurity affects the entire family, but has a particularly negative effect on children and young adults. Without proper sustenance, students are more likely to struggle and suffer emotionally, academically, and physically. Repeated studies show that school food programs for students can lead to improved outcomes in many areas of life. Additionally, such a program lifts some of the economic burden that weighs down on parents struggling to make ends meet.

This bill would improve student health and help boost their academic outcomes. It would help educators and faculty by creating a healthy classroom environment. And it would help struggling parents by letting them know their children can receive the sustenance they need to succeed.

We respectfully request the committee members to take an important step in guiding our state to a more equitable future by helping all Maryland students, and ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 557.

# **MDCAPE sb557 (meals) - FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alan Lencz

Position: FAV



*Maryland's Voice for  
Nonpublic Education*

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## BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

### SENATE BILL 557

### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION - BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAMS - UNIVERSAL EXPANSION

FEBRUARY 22, 2023

### SUPPORT

Maryland CAPE is our state's chapter and one of 40 state chapters of the Council for American Private Education. Our network includes the Catholic, Christian, Evangelical Lutheran, Friends, Independent, Jewish, Lutheran, Montessori, Muslim, and Seventh Day Adventist school communities. We speak on behalf of roughly 120,000 nonpublic school students attending over one thousand nonpublic schools across our great state of Maryland.

We issue this testimony in support of Senate Bill 557.

Many of our students suffer from food insecurity. Sometimes, this may be a product of a family suffering from economic stress, while at other times it may be a result of some other issue. Regardless of the cause, food insecurity means a harder time for the student, both while in school and after dismissal. Hungry students are more likely to disturb others, making it harder for teachers to manage their classrooms effectively. And while many students do qualify for food aid, many just miss participation thresholds.

Allowing all school students to participate in school meals will help students maximize their time at school and improve physical and emotional health outcomes, help Maryland educators teach in a healthy classroom environment, and help families just above the current cut-offs who nonetheless struggle economically. Additionally, this bill can help remove the stigma that currently comes when students are singled out for participation in special meal tiers, and can help reduce the burden on school administrators in their work to process student meal programs and needs.

As pandemic-era waivers and policies draw to a close, child nutrition should not be allowed to fall to the wayside. We respectfully request a FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 557.

Thank you.

# **SB 557\_ Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfas**

Uploaded by: Alexa Thomas

Position: FAV



**PSSAM**  
Public School Superintendents' Association  
OF MARYLAND

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**BILL:** SB 557

**TITLE:** Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

**DATE:** February 22, 2023

**POSITION:** Support

**COMMITTEE:** Budget and Taxation / Education, Energy, and the Environment

**CONTACT:** Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

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The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 557.

Senate Bill 557 is intended to reimburse local boards of education for the cost of providing free breakfast and lunch to all students attending public and participating private schools under the State's Free Feeding Program.

PSSAM strongly supports this legislation and the State's generous participation. Based on our experiences during Covid in feeding students and families, we are extremely confident that all twenty-four local school systems will be able to implement such an ambitious program effectively and efficiently.

The research on free meals for all students is vast and universally confirms the positive impact on student achievement, including academics and behavior. According to Madelein Levin and Jessie Hewins, the authors of *Universal Free School Meals: Ensuring That All Children are Able to Learn*, their findings include increased participation in meal programs, in part due to the removal of the stigma of "free lunch." In addition, there is no room for error in identifying food-challenged students with the elimination of paper applications. Students in school meal programs are also more likely to eat healthier foods, including fruits, vegetables, and milk. In turn, these healthier eating habits positively impact lower childhood obesity. Removing the transaction of paying for meals also results in more time for students to eat. According to Levin and Hewins, families also benefit strongly from free meal programs as it reduces their financial burden of purchasing two meals a day for their children.



Lastly, research shows that a consistently well-fed student is a better student, test-taker and participant in school. Participation in the free meal programs is also linked to fewer absences, increased attention span, decreased tardiness and behavior problems, and overall, an improved school environment.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 557 and urges a favorable report.

**SB557 Written Testimony\_final.pdf**

Uploaded by: Allyson Wade

Position: FAV

### **Testimony in Support of SB557**

Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion  
*Before the Ways and Means Committee: February 22, 2023*

Senate Bill 557, cross-filed with House Bill 628, expands the existing State free breakfast and lunch programs to require every school that participates in the federal School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program to provide free school meals to every student. The bill requires the State to reimburse schools for administering the programs only after federal funding is applied.

This testimony will first describe how SB557 expands the current state and federal free breakfast and lunch programs and ensures that state funding will only be used to the extent federal funding does not reimburse the schools. Second, it will explain how this bill will benefit both students and administrators by providing the conditions for our children to grow into healthy adults, reducing stigma related to receiving free school lunch or incurring school lunch debt, and reducing administrative burdens related to determining eligibility for free school meals. Finally, this testimony will demonstrate that, by passing SB557, Maryland can join the growing number of states expanding the number of schools that provide free school meals to all students.

### **Federal and State Legal Landscape**

Under current Maryland law, every public school is required to administer free school breakfast and lunch programs. Nonprofit private schools can also opt to participate. Participating schools provide free breakfast and lunch to students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals under the federal School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program (“Federal Programs”). A student may be eligible based on household income and family size; a determination which requires the family to fill out an arduous application that often presents a barrier to receiving needed meals for otherwise eligible students. Alternatively, a student may be automatically eligible, referred to as categorical eligibility, based on participation in other federal programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Medicaid. SB557 would require each school that participates in the federal School Breakfast Program to provide free breakfast to every student, and each school that participates in the National School Lunch Program to provide free lunch to every student, regardless of eligibility under the Federal Programs.

SB557 ensures that no state funds will be expended until federal funding is applied to reimburse participating schools. There are two reimbursement models under the Federal Programs: (1) free and reduced-price meals, and (2) the community eligibility provision (CEP). Under the free and reduced-price meals model, the federal reimbursement rate is based on a fixed dollar amount for each free, reduced-price, and full-price meal served. For example, for the 2022-23 school year, schools where less than 60% of lunches served are free or reduced-price are reimbursed \$4.33 for each free lunch, \$3.93 for each reduced-price lunch, and \$0.77 for each

full-price lunch served.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the State already provides supplemental reimbursement to provide free meals for those who qualify for reduced-price meals. SB557 thus requires the State to reimburse schools the difference between the cost of providing free meals to students who are not eligible for free or reduced-price meals and the amount reimbursed by the federal government for full-price meals served.

By contrast, a school that participates in CEP is required to provide free school meals to all students, regardless of eligibility for free and reduced price meals. To participate in CEP, at least 40% of students in the school or school district must be categorically eligible for free meals. However, schools that are eligible for CEP are not required to participate; schools may opt not to participate due to the cost of providing free meals to all students. The percentage of students who are categorically eligible is referred to as the “identified student percentage” (ISP). Under CEP, schools are reimbursed by the federal government on a sliding scale based on the school’s ISP. Schools with an ISP of 65% or greater are fully reimbursed, while schools with an ISP between 40% and 65% are only partially reimbursed. SB557 requires the State to reimburse a school participating in CEP the difference between the cost to the school of offering each student a free meal and the amount reimbursed by the federal government.

This bill would provide support for schools who are eligible for CEP but are not eligible for full reimbursement by the federal government. Schools that have an ISP of less than 65% must cover the additional cost of providing free school meals to all students out of their individual budgets. In some cases, this deters schools from participating in CEP because of the additional cost. In Allegany County, for example, 15 out of 24 public schools are eligible for CEP, yet only 4 participate. This amounts to 1,624 children who could receive free school meals under the Federal Programs, yet do not because of the school’s choice not to opt in. By contrast, in Baltimore County, every public school that is eligible for CEP participates. However, 84 out of 87 CEP-participating schools are not fully reimbursed by the federal government. That means half of the 168 public schools in Baltimore County would benefit from the additional funding provided by this bill to supplement the costs of participating in CEP.<sup>2</sup> Thus, SB557 would support schools by ensuring they can maximize the benefits offered by the federal government under CEP. It would encourage schools to opt in to CEP because they would now be required to offer free breakfast and lunch, and the calculation for reimbursement under CEP is more beneficial to the State.

### **Impact on Students and Schools**

SB557 will not only ensure that our children do not go hungry, but will have numerous other benefits. It will ensure that our children grow in conditions that foster healthy and

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<sup>1</sup> National School Lunch, Special Milk, and School Breakfast Programs, National Average Payments/Maximum Reimbursement Rates, 87 Fed. Reg. 44,329, 44,333 (July 1, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> MD. PUBL. SCHS., COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY PROVISION (CEP) PUBLIC NOTIFICATION DATA SCHOOL YEAR 2021-22 (2022), <https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/SchoolandCommunityNutrition/Documents/CEP/CEP%202022-Accessible.pdf>.

productive lives, reduce barriers like stigma and complex applications that prevent students from receiving needed school meals, and provide administrative benefits to schools.

*A. SB557 ensures children grow in conditions that promote healthy lives.*

Access to healthy and nutritious food is a social determinant of health—it is one of the nonmedical conditions that influences health outcomes and shapes quality of life.<sup>3</sup> Children facing hunger are more likely to face a myriad of negative health outcomes. They are more likely to be hospitalized; are more likely to get sick and recover from illness more slowly; face higher risks of asthma, anemia, dental caries, and mental health disorders; and are more likely to experience developmental, emotional, social, and behavioral issues. The effects of malnutrition can continue into adulthood, leading to diabetes, high cholesterol, and heart disease.<sup>4</sup> Malnourishment can also impact other social determinants of health, like education and economic stability. Hunger can make it difficult for children to learn and retain information, making it harder for them to reach milestones like high school graduation and higher education. This in turn can impact a child’s future economic stability and ability to obtain a job with health benefits and an income sufficient to pay for necessities like food, housing, and healthcare costs. Thus, providing free school meals today ensures that our children can grow in conditions that promote a healthy life in the long-term.

*B. SB557 reduces stigma and complex applications that place barriers between students and needed meals.*

SB557 will also reduce barriers that prevent students from receiving needed meals. When all students receive free meals, the stigma targeted at students who receive free meals or have student lunch debt is removed. Students will be able to receive meals that they are eligible for without feeling othered or fearing that they may be bullied, and students who have not been deemed eligible but need a school meal will be able to eat without being penalized for incurring a school lunch debt. Families have reported a number of shaming tactics used by schools against students with school lunch debt, including making children wear stamps or wristbands to show they owe, making children do chores, or replacing meals with alternative, less desirable lunches.<sup>5</sup> This bill will ensure that no student is punished or shamed for simply eating breakfast and lunch. Additionally, lengthy and complex eligibility applications will no longer be required, which has long been a barrier for families who qualify for free school meals but have difficulty completing the required forms.

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<sup>3</sup> *Social Determinants of Health at CDC*, CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION (Dec. 8, 2022), <https://www.cdc.gov/about/sdoh/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> *Facts About Child Hunger in America*, FEEDING AMERICA, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/child-hunger-facts> (last visited Feb. 18, 2023); ALEXANDRA ASHBROOK ET AL., AM. ACAD. OF PEDIATRICS & FOOD RSCH. & ACTION CTR., SCREEN AND INTERVENE: A TOOLKIT FOR PEDIATRICIANS TO ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY (2021), 6–8 [https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/FRAC\\_AAP\\_Toolkit\\_2021\\_032122.pdf](https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/FRAC_AAP_Toolkit_2021_032122.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Hannah Gaskill, *Bill Would Ban ‘Lunch Shaming’ of Poor Children*, MD. MATTERS (Feb. 19, 2020), <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2020/02/19/bill-would-ban-lunch-shaming-of-poor-children/>; Baltimore Sun Editorial Board, *Hungry Students Should Not Be Humiliated at School*, BALTIMORE SUN (Oct. 28, 2019), <https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/editorial/bs-ed-1028-hunger-schools-20191028-7phdfxv2zne6betuxxumjbkkm-story.html>.

*C. SB557 provides administrative benefits to schools.*

In addition to the benefits to students on an individual level, the bill will help to support schools in providing meals for their students. Offering free meals for all students removes several administrative burdens, which reduces overhead costs. Since schools no longer need to determine eligibility for each student, there will be less administrative costs in administering the free breakfast and lunch programs. Schools will no longer need to keep track of school lunch debt or keep records of payments. Schools can also streamline the delivery system for school meals, making meal delivery quicker and making it easier to offer alternative delivery systems like meals in classrooms.

### **Joining Other Jurisdictions that Recognize the Importance of Feeding Our Students**

By requiring most schools to provide free school meals to all students, Maryland would be joining a wave of states implementing similar near-universal school meal policies. For example, California,<sup>6</sup> Maine,<sup>7</sup> and Colorado<sup>8</sup> have all recently passed laws to offer free school meals in all public schools, regardless of eligibility status. Massachusetts,<sup>9</sup> Vermont,<sup>10</sup> and Nevada<sup>11</sup> are all requiring most schools to offer free school meals to all children for the 2022-23 school year. The Minnesota House recently passed a bill to require all schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, several other states go beyond Maryland in expanding the number of students provided with free school meals. Oregon provides funding to expand the number of schools providing free breakfast and lunch to all students through expanding CEP participation and increasing income eligibility for free meals to 300% of the poverty line at non-CEP schools.<sup>13</sup> Virginia<sup>14</sup> and Washington<sup>15</sup> both require schools to participate in CEP if they are eligible, which expands the number of schools offering free meals to all students. Passing SB557 would put Maryland in parity with the growing number states that recognize the importance of providing free school meals to as many students as possible.

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<sup>6</sup> CAL. EDUC. CODE § 49501.5.

<sup>7</sup> LD 1679, 130th Leg., 1st Spec. Sess. (Me. 2021).

<sup>8</sup> COLO. REV. STAT. § 22-82.9-204.

<sup>9</sup> 2022 Mass. Acts Ch. 126 7053-1925 (“[N]ot less than \$110,000,000 shall be expended on universal free school meals which shall be made available to all students at no charge regardless of household income . . .”).

<sup>10</sup> S. 100, 2021-2022 Leg. Sess. (Vt. 2022).

<sup>11</sup> STATE OF NEVADA RECOVERY PLAN 30 (2022),

<https://budget.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/budgetnv.gov/content/Services/State%20of%20Nevada%20SLFRF%20Recovery%20Plan%202022.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> HF 5, 93d Leg. (Minn. 2023).

<sup>13</sup> OR. REV. STAT. § 327.548.

<sup>14</sup> VA. CODE § 22.1-207.401.

<sup>15</sup> WASH. REV. CODE § 28A.235.300.

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### **Conclusion**

Providing free school meals to as many students as possible benefits our students and our schools. Maryland should join the number of states that are expanding access to free school meals. This will not only reduce hunger, but will ensure students grow up in conditions that support a healthy life in the long term, ensure students who need school meals can receive them without facing stigma, reduce administrative burdens, and support schools in maximizing the number of children who can receive free meals under the Federal Programs. For these reasons, the Committee should vote in favor of SB557.

*This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Public Health Law Clinic at the University of Maryland Carey School of Law and not by the School of Law, the University of Maryland, Baltimore, or the University of Maryland System.*

# **SB 557 - Maryland Food Bank - SUPPORT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Anne Wallerstedt

Position: FAV



## **SB 557**

**Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion  
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
February 22, 2023**

### **SUPPORT**

Senate Bill 557 provides breakfast and lunch at no cost to all Maryland students who attend a school that participates in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that 1 in 3 Marylanders are at risk of food insecurity. A person who is food insecure does not have consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day, and this problem persists in every area of the state. There are also communities and populations who are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, including families with children and communities of color. The causes of food insecurity are complex and often include additional factors such as low income, lack of reliable transportation, and missing community resources such as grocery stores.

The economic stability of a child's family should not dictate whether they are able to eat nutritious food every day, yet for too many Marylanders this is the reality. 2 in 5 Maryland families making less than \$35,000 a year are considered food insufficient. However, it is not just families in the lowest income bracket who are struggling. 37% of all Marylanders are currently finding it difficult to afford their basic household necessities – including food, and more alarming is that 40% of Maryland families report that their children are not eating enough because food is unaffordable.

The Maryland Food Bank sees firsthand the absolute beneficial impact of meals that are served while children are at schools or other safe community centers through our Supper Club, which served 480,000 meals at 34 sites to children after school in FY 22, and our Summer Club, which served 73,000 meals at 41 sites to children during the summer of 2022. Further, we operate food pantries at 178 K-12 schools across the state, where we distributed the equivalent of 2.2 million meals last year. The sheer magnitude of need is present in these programs, and the Maryland Food Bank knows that our efforts, while substantial, cannot alone solve child food insecurity in the state, as a crucial time of day for children to eat is missing – namely, breakfasts and lunches.

Maryland has a real opportunity to equitably even the education field for thousands of students who may need their schools to provide them the only healthy meals their family can afford. By providing meals to *all* students at no cost, this also removes any stigma that might be perceived and ensures that all children start the day with the same foundation of nutritious foods that can fuel their learning.

The Maryland Food Bank appreciates your consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 557.

**NKH MD\_MD SB 0557\_Statement of Support\_FINAL - Wri**

Uploaded by: Ayesha Holmes

Position: FAV



MARYLAND

7 Testimony IN FAVOR  
Ayesha B. Holmes, Maryland Director  
[aholmes@Strength.org](mailto:aholmes@Strength.org)

**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee**

**Re: Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs  
Universal Expansion**

February 22, 2023

Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Committee,

**No Kid Hungry Maryland writes in support of SB 0557 which proposes universal expansion of  
Breakfast and Lunch in all Maryland public schools.**

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 2020, 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 Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) and Universal Meals play a critical role in reducing food insecurity for children and Maryland families.

The policy outlined in SB 0557 would allow children across the state to access meals at no cost to them. This would decrease stigma for children who might need assistance from the Federal Nutrition Programs addressing needs for children through the Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs) program. Also, this type of program will ensure that children, whose families are living just beyond the FARMs threshold, but are still food insecure, would have access as well.

No Kid Hungry Maryland encourages the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to favorably report out on SB 0557, so that more students can be served without stigma.

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**

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

**SB 557.pdf**

Uploaded by: Barbara Harral

Position: FAV

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 557

### Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

*Senate Budget & Taxation Committee*

February 22, 2023

**Barbara W. Harral, RDN; Director  
Division of Food & Nutrition Services  
Montgomery County Public Schools  
Past President, Md School Nutrition Association**

I strongly support SB 557, which aims to expand access to school meals by providing state funds to cover the cost of school breakfast and school lunch for all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program. This legislation is an essential investment for the health and academic success of Maryland students.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought increased attention to the unacceptably high number of Maryland families that struggle with food insecurity, a number which has remained alarmingly elevated over the past three years. As hundreds of thousands of Maryland children and families continue down the long road to recovery from the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, there has never been a more important time to make significant investments in the school meal programs.

Extensive research has linked participation in school meals to a number of benefits:

- improved academic achievement, standardized test scores, and cognitive function<sup>1 2 3</sup>;
- improved attendance, which is positively linked to academic achievement<sup>4 5</sup>;
- reduced food insecurity, which is linked to poor academic outcomes<sup>6</sup>;
- improved nutrition, such as increased consumption of fruit, vegetables, and milk<sup>7</sup>;

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<sup>1</sup> Vaisman, N., Voet, H., Akivis, A., & Vakil, E., (1996). Effects of Breakfast Timing on Cognitive Functions of Elementary School Students. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8859144/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ptomey, L. T., Steger, F. L., Schubert, M. M., Lee, J., Willis, E. A., Sullivan, D. K., Szabo-Reed, A. N., Washburn, R. A., & Donnelly, J. E. (2016). Breakfast intake and composition is associated with superior academic achievement in elementary schoolchildren. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26697955/>.

<sup>3</sup> Frisvold, D. E. (2015). Nutrition and cognitive achievement: an evaluation of the School Breakfast Program. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0047272714002497>.

<sup>4</sup> Murphy, J. M. (2007). Breakfast and learning: an updated review. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638584\\_Breakfast\\_and\\_Learning\\_An\\_Updated\\_Review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638584_Breakfast_and_Learning_An_Updated_Review).

<sup>5</sup> Basch, C. E. (2011). Breakfast and the achievement gap among urban minority youth. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21923876/>.

<sup>6</sup> Huang, J., & Barnidge, E. (2016). Low-income children's participation in the National School Lunch Program and household food insufficiency. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26722983/>.

<sup>7</sup> Clark, M. A., & Fox, M. K. (2009). Nutritional quality of the diets of U.S. public school children and the role of the school meal programs. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19166672/>.

- improved overall health and long-term health outcomes, as well as reduction in obesity rates, anxiety, and depression<sup>8 9</sup>.

Marylanders need this investment. During the 2020 and 2021 school years, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has provided waivers to schools across the country, allowing school meals to be served at no cost to all students across the country, ensuring that every student had access to these important benefits. However, now that these waivers have ended, we have returned to a tiered payment system that leaves too many children out by allowing them to fall through the cracks. For example, to qualify for free school meals, a student's family must be living at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, which translates to annual income of less than \$36,000 for a family of four for the 2021–2022 school year<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, a family of four must have an annual income of around \$52,000 or less to qualify for reduced-price meals. With the cost of living on the rise, there are too many Maryland families who struggle financially to meet their most basic needs and yet do not qualify because their income exceeds this incredibly low eligibility threshold.

By providing school meals at no cost to all students, Maryland would be supporting equity in the classroom and making sure every child has the nutrition they need in order to excel. These meals are important to students' academic success just as textbooks or transportation are and should be treated as a critical component to education. When students are distracted by hunger because they were unable to afford school breakfast or lunch, they miss out on the chance to learn and benefit from the important opportunities offered by Maryland's education system.

Hungry kids can't learn. Ensuring that every child in the state has access to a nutritious school breakfast and lunch every day is a smart and effective investment in Maryland's communities and future.

As such, I thank you for your consideration and urge a favorable report on SB 557.

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<sup>8</sup> Gundersen, C., Kreider, B., & Pepper, J. (2012). The impact of the National School Lunch Program on child health: a nonparametric bounds analysis. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304407611001205>.

<sup>9</sup> Kleinman, R. E., Hall, S., Green, H., Korzec-Ramirez, D., Patton, K., Pagano, M. E., & Murphy, J. M. (2002). Diet, breakfast, and academic performance in children. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12428078/>.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2022). Child Nutrition Programs: Income Eligibility Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fr-021622>.

# **SB557.pdf**

Uploaded by: Beth Jarrett

Position: FAV



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB SB 557

### Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

*Senate Budget & Taxation Committee*

February 22, 2023

The PTA Council of Baltimore County – the official parent stakeholder group of Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) which supports and trains nearly 150 PTA units in BCPS and represents thousands of PTA members– supports SB 557, which aims to expand access to school meals by providing state funds to cover the cost of school breakfast and school lunch for all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought increased attention to the unacceptably high number of Maryland families that struggle with food insecurity, a number which has remained alarmingly elevated over the past three years. As hundreds of thousands of Maryland children and families continue down the long road to recovery from the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, there has never been a more important time to make significant investments in the school meal programs.

Extensive research has linked participation in school meals to a number of benefits:

- improved academic achievement, standardized test scores, and cognitive function<sup>1 2 3</sup>;
- improved attendance, which is positively linked to academic achievement<sup>4 5</sup>;
- reduced food insecurity, which is linked to poor academic outcomes<sup>6</sup>;
- improved nutrition, such as increased consumption of fruit, vegetables, and milk<sup>7</sup>;

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<sup>1</sup> Vaisman, N., Voet, H., Akivis, A., & Vakil, E., (1996). Effects of Breakfast Timing on Cognitive Functions of Elementary School Students. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8859144/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ptomey, L. T., Steger, F. L., Schubert, M. M., Lee, J., Willis, E. A., Sullivan, D. K., Szabo-Reed, A. N., Washburn, R. A., & Donnelly, J. E. (2016). Breakfast intake and composition is associated with superior academic achievement in elementary schoolchildren. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26697955/>.

<sup>3</sup> Frisvold, D. E. (2015). Nutrition and cognitive achievement: an evaluation of the School Breakfast Program. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0047272714002497>.

<sup>4</sup> Murphy, J. M. (2007). Breakfast and learning: an updated review. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638584\\_Breakfast\\_and\\_Learning\\_An\\_Updated\\_Review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638584_Breakfast_and_Learning_An_Updated_Review).

<sup>5</sup> Basch, C. E. (2011). Breakfast and the achievement gap among urban minority youth. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21923876/>.

<sup>6</sup> Huang, J., & Barnidge, E. (2016). Low-income children's participation in the National School Lunch Program and household food insufficiency. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26722983/>.

<sup>7</sup> Clark, M. A., & Fox, M. K. (2009). Nutritional quality of the diets of U.S. public school children and the role of the school meal programs. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19166672/>.



- improved overall health and long-term health outcomes, as well as reduction in obesity rates, anxiety, and depression<sup>8 9</sup>.

Marylanders need this investment. During the 2020 and 2021 school years, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has provided waivers to schools across the country, allowing school meals to be served at no cost to all students across the country, ensuring that every student had access to these important benefits. However, now that these waivers have ended, we have returned to a tiered payment system that has historically left too many children out by allowing them to fall through the cracks. For example, to qualify for free school meals, a student's family must be living at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, which translates to annual income of less than \$36,000 for a family of four for the 2021–2022 school year<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, a family of four must have an annual income of around \$52,000 or less to qualify for reduced-price meals. With the cost of living on the rise, there are too many Maryland families who struggle financially to meet their most basic needs and yet do not qualify because their income exceeds this incredibly low eligibility threshold.

By providing school meals at no cost to all students, Maryland would be supporting equity in the classroom and making sure every child has the nutrition they need in order to excel. These meals are just as important to students' academic success as textbooks or transportation and should be treated as a critical component to education. When students are distracted by hunger because they were unable to participate in school breakfast or lunch, they miss out on the chance to learn and benefit from the important opportunities offered by Maryland's education system.

Hungry kids can't learn. Ensuring that every child in the state has access to a nutritious school breakfast and lunch every day is a smart and effective investment in Maryland's communities and future.

As such, I thank you for your consideration and urge a favorable report on SB 557.

Submitted on behalf of PTA Council of Baltimore County, Inc. by

Leslie Weber, President  
PTA Council of Baltimore County, Inc.  
[www.bcptacouncil.org](http://www.bcptacouncil.org)

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<sup>8</sup> Gundersen, C., Kreider, B., & Pepper, J. (2012). The impact of the National School Lunch Program on child health: a nonparametric bounds analysis. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304407611001205>.

<sup>9</sup> Kleinman, R. E., Hall, S., Green, H., Korzec-Ramirez, D., Patton, K., Pagano, M. E., & Murphy, J. M. (2002). Diet, breakfast, and academic performance in children. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12428078/>.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2022). Child Nutrition Programs: Income Eligibility Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fr-021622>.

**20230220 HSFM MCCPTA testimony HB628.pdf**

Uploaded by: CHELSI LEWIS

Position: FAV

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB628

*House Ways and Means Committee*

February 22, 2023

**I am Fania Yangarber, Executive Director of Healthy School Food Maryland®. I am testifying on behalf of the over 6,000 parents whom we represent across Maryland, and I am also testifying on behalf of Chelsi Lewis, Chair of the Food & Nutrition Subcommittee of the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations (MCCPTA).**

We strongly support **HB628**, which aims to expand access to school meals by providing state funds to cover the cost of school breakfast and school lunch for all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought increased attention to the unacceptably high number of Maryland families that struggle with food insecurity, a number which has remained alarmingly elevated over the past three years. As hundreds of thousands of Maryland children and families continue down the long road to recovery from the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, there has never been a more important time to make significant investments in the school meal programs.

Extensive research has linked participation in school meals to many benefits:

- improved academic achievement, standardized test scores, and cognitive function<sup>1 2 3</sup>;
- improved attendance, which is positively linked to academic achievement<sup>4 5</sup>;
- reduced food insecurity, which is linked to poor academic outcomes<sup>6</sup>;
- improved nutrition, such as increased consumption of fruit, vegetables, and milk<sup>7</sup>;
- improved overall health and long-term health outcomes, as well as reduction in obesity rates, anxiety, and depression<sup>8 9</sup>.

The expansion of free school meals to all students is critical in addressing the lack of access to healthy food in schools that students in elementary through high schools have been dealing with for many years. Providing free

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<sup>1</sup> Vaisman, N., Voet, H., Akivis, A., & Vakil, E., (1996). Effects of Breakfast Timing on Cognitive Functions of Elementary School Students. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8859144/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ptomey, L. T., Steger, F. L., Schubert, M. M., Lee, J., Willis, E. A., Sullivan, D. K., Szabo-Reed, A. N., Washburn, R. A., & Donnelly, J. E. (2016). Breakfast intake and composition is associated with superior academic achievement in elementary schoolchildren. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26697955/>.

<sup>3</sup> Frisvold, D. E. (2015). Nutrition and cognitive achievement: an evaluation of the School Breakfast Program. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0047272714002497>.

<sup>4</sup> Murphy, J. M. (2007). Breakfast and learning: an updated review. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638584\\_Breakfast\\_and\\_Learning\\_An\\_Updated\\_Review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638584_Breakfast_and_Learning_An_Updated_Review).

<sup>5</sup> Basch, C. E. (2011). Breakfast and the achievement gap among urban minority youth. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21923876/>.

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<sup>8</sup> Gunderson, C., Kreider, B., & Pepper, J. (2012). The impact of the National School Lunch Program on child health: a nonparametric bounds analysis. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304407611001205>.

<sup>9</sup> Kleinman, R. E., Hall, S., Green, H., Korzec-Ramirez, D., Patton, K., Pagano, M. E., & Murphy, J. M. (2002). Diet, breakfast, and academic performance in children. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12428078/>.

school meals to all students in a school also helps to reduce stigma around free and reduced meals.

**Marylanders need this investment.**

In our own county, nearly forty percent of our student population qualifies for Free and Reduced Meals. During the first 18 months of the pandemic, **Healthy School Food Maryland®** and **MCCPTA** worked with the Montgomery County Food Security Task Force, coordinated by the Montgomery County Food Council and the Department of Health and Human Services, and with Montgomery County Public Schools to deliver over 100,000 pounds of fresh produce and 70,000 school meals directly to families. Our volunteers interacted directly with these communities, and it was clear that while the access that we were expanding during the most critical months of the pandemic was crucial, the need in the communities was high and didn't end when HFSM's and MCCPTA's intervention did. Consistent access to school meals is the minimum requirement to improve outcomes for underserved communities. **HB628** addresses access, and we believe this is a good beginning to ensuring nutrition security for all of Maryland's school children.

Prior to the pandemic, too many Maryland children were left out of the benefits of access to nutritious food due to the current program structure. For example, to qualify for free school meals, a student's family must be living at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, which translates to annual income of less than \$36,000 for a family of four for the 2021–2022 school year<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, a family of four must have an annual income of around \$52,000 or less to qualify for reduced-price meals. Because the eligibility threshold for these programs is so low, many Maryland families who struggle financially to meet their most basic needs do not qualify, especially given the cost of living in many communities. In Montgomery County, where the area median income in 2020 was \$110,012, a significant number of students would not qualify for free school meals under the current system yet may be facing food insecurity due to the high cost of living and the significant economic and social challenges families face in the aftermath of the pandemic. A 2017 Montgomery County Food Council report revealed that based on the cost of living in Montgomery County, it costs at least \$91,252 for a four-person family to afford the basic necessities, much higher than the \$24,860 Federal Poverty level.<sup>11</sup>

Maryland has made strides in supporting equitable access to school meals by reimbursing additional funds for reduced price meals. Several states—including California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Maine, and Vermont—have taken more significant steps to ensure that access to school meals is something that families can count on, and Maryland should do the same. Providing school meals at no cost to all students and families in the state is a smart and effective investment in Maryland communities. Maryland would be supporting equity in the classroom and making sure every child has the nutrition they need to excel. These meals are just as important to students' academic success as textbooks or transportation and should be treated as a critical component to education. When students are distracted by hunger because they were unable to participate in school breakfast or lunch, they miss out on the chance to learn and benefit from the important opportunities offered by Maryland's education system.

**We strongly urge a favorable report on HB628** to support students, families, schools, and entire communities throughout Maryland.

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2022). Child Nutrition Programs: Income Eligibility Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fr-021622>.

<sup>11</sup> A Food Secure Montgomery County: A 5-Year Strategic Plan (2017). Available at: [https://assets.jhsph.edu/clf/mod\\_clfResource/doc/MoCo\\_Food-Security-Plan\\_2017\\_small.pdf](https://assets.jhsph.edu/clf/mod_clfResource/doc/MoCo_Food-Security-Plan_2017_small.pdf)

# **MAND Testimony 2023 - Support - Senate Bill 557 -**

Uploaded by: Daniel Shattuck

Position: FAV

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## MARYLAND ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS



**Date:** February 22, 2023

**Bill:** Senate Bill 557 - Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

**Committee:** Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair

**Position:** Support

The Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND) represents nearly 1200 Registered & Licensed Dietitian/Nutritionists in the state who work in a variety of facilities and agencies to provide education related to nutrition for the benefit of the health our citizens. We would like to support **Senate Bill 557 - Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion.**

The bill will alter *“the standards of the State Free Feeding Program, beginning in fiscal year 2025, to require that if a school participates in the federal School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch Program, then each student in the school must be offered a meal at no cost to the student; providing for the reimbursement rate at which the State shall pay county boards and participating nonpublic schools for the meals offered to students.”*

Food insecurity disrupts food intake or eating patterns due to a lack of money or resources. Food insecurity among children has been associated with adverse health, social, and academic outcomes. Child nutrition programs improve diet quality, and academic performance for low-income and food-insecure households. This legislation addresses the direct correlation between student learning outcomes and good nutrition. Moreover, improved nutrition has the potential to positively influence students’ academic performance and behavior. Though researchers are still working to definitively prove the link, existing data suggests that with better nutrition students are better able to learn, students have fewer absences, and students’ behavior improves, causing fewer disruptions in the classroom. Several studies show that nutritional status can directly affect mental capacity among school-aged children. For example, iron deficiency even in early stages, can decrease dopamine transmission, thus negatively impacting cognition. Deficiencies in other vitamins and minerals, specifically thiamine, vitamin E, vitamin B, iodine, and zinc, are shown to inhibit cognitive abilities and mental concentration. (1)

USDA school meal programs and other child nutrition programs improve food security. They do so by augmenting overall household resources and providing children with a regular source of

nutritious meals. Understanding the role that school meal programs play in the dietary adequacy of children at risk for food insecurity helps assess program effectiveness. (2)

The Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recognizes that many of the populations we serve are at risk for food insecurity. The Academy's policy recommendations for healthy food systems and access includes Food Security.

Increasing access to affordable, healthy foods and safe water in communities, places of work, and schools, helps support efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to link healthy food to positive health outcomes. (3)

For these reasons, we support the goals and aims of Senate Bill 557 and ask for a FAVORABLE report.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Glenda L. Lindsey, Dr. PH, MS, RDN, LDN  
Public Policy Coordinator  
[glendalindsey@msn.com](mailto:glendalindsey@msn.com)

Ashley Lewis, RDN  
MAND President  
[president@eatwellmd.org](mailto:president@eatwellmd.org)

**References:**

1. [healthy-food-choices-in-schools.extension.org/3-ways-nutrition-influence](https://healthy-food-choices-in-schools.extension.org/3-ways-nutrition-influence)
2. Wolfson JA, Leung CW. Food insecurity and COVID-19: disparities in early effects for U.S. adults. *Nutrients*. 2020;12(6):1648. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu12061648> Crossref, Google Scholar
3. <https://files.constantcontact.com/9806343e601/e5179f65-55a9-4410-9435-68ae82770260.pdf>

**FRACTestimonyMarylandSB0557.pdf**

Uploaded by: Elisabet Eppes

Position: FAV



**Testimony to Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee in Support of SB 557**

**Alexis Bylander, Senior Policy Analyst at the Food Research & Action Center**

**February 17, 2023**

Thank you for the opportunity for the Food Research & Action Center to submit testimony in support of [SB 557](#), which would provide all Maryland students with access to a free breakfast and lunch at school.

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) is the leading national nonprofit organization working to improve public policies and public-private partnerships to eradicate hunger and undernutrition in the United States. FRAC has worked for decades to improve and strengthen the federal School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs through federal and state legislation. We work extensively with federal, state, and local government agencies, schools, private nonprofit organizations and other stakeholders to ensure that the programs reach the children who need them.

**States across the country are recognizing the importance of free school meals for all students and passing legislation.** California, Maine and Colorado have passed permanent School Meals for All policies and Vermont, Massachusetts and Nevada have established free school meals for all students for the 2022-2023 school year. Many additional states are currently considering similar legislation.

**The National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program are the two largest child nutrition programs in the United States.** Students are in school approximately 180 days a year and many students participate in school-based before and after school care and summer programming. Providing healthy meals to students through the School Nutrition Programs can significantly increase food-security for students. In fact, a [recent study](#) found that U.S. children are getting their healthiest meals at school, demonstrating that school meals are one of the federal government's most powerful tools for delivering good nutrition to children.

**The School Nutrition Programs support academic achievement.** School meals serve as both a nutritional support and an educational support because hungry children do not have the focus and energy to learn or get the most out of their school day. There is a strong body of research that links participation in school meals to positive educational and health outcomes for our nation's children. Studies have shown participation in school meals improves students' attendance, behavior, and academic achievement, and reduces tardiness. Students who eat breakfast at school [perform better on standardized tests](#) than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home, and have improved scores in spelling, reading, and math. Additionally, school breakfast

reduces the number of visits to the school nurse in the morning, [improves students' mental health](#), and reduces behavioral problems, anxiety, and depression. The positive impacts of participating in school meals are long lasting, supporting long-term overall educational attainment among students participating in school meals.

**All students should permanently receive free school meals.** Building back from the pandemic gives us an opportunity to reimagine the way school meal programs operate. Serving school meals to all students at no cost would be a gamechanger for students, families and schools, supporting students' education and health and improving school nutrition finances and operations.

**Serving all students eliminates the stigma associated with school meals and will put an end to unpaid school meal debt.** Offering free and reduced-price meals only to students from low-income households can create a stigma and reduce participation. By providing every student the opportunity to participate in school meals, the stigma some children, particularly older students, fear of being labeled low-income by their classmates is eliminated. Free meals for all students eliminate school meal debt, which has been a problem for many families and schools under a tiered payment system.

Perhaps most importantly, at a time when our country is critically examining how to end racial disparities, **free school meals for all can help advance equity.** Free meals would help reduce racial disparities in health and education for Black, Latinx and Indigenous children, who experience hunger at disproportionate rates and face systemic barriers to food access both at school and in their communities. Providing school meals to all students is also critical for advancing racial equity and justice, as it would ensure that Black, Indigenous and Latinx students are able to access the key nutrition they need to thrive in the classroom and beyond.

**Providing free school meals to all students is an investment in Maryland's future. We urge you to support Senate Bill 557.**

**BaltimoreCounty\_FAV\_SB0557.pdf**

Uploaded by: Elisabeth Sachs

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.  
*County Executive*

JENNIFER AIOSA  
*Director of Government Affairs*

AMANDA KONTZ CARR  
*Legislative Officer*

JOSHUA M. GREENBERG  
*Associate Director of Government Affairs*

**BILL NO.:**            **SB 557**

**TITLE:**                **Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion**

**SPONSOR:**           **Senator Guzzone**

**COMMITTEE:**       **Budget and Taxation**

**POSITION:**         **SUPPORT**

**DATE:**                **February 22, 2023**

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 557 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion. This vital legislation would expand the State Free Feeding Program to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students attending a qualifying school.

No student should be left to attend school on an empty stomach. Students who do not receive proper nutrition generally score lower on exams, struggle more to pay attention in class, and overall experience lower quality of life. Students who cannot afford to purchase breakfast or lunch are left at a significant disadvantage which threatens their ability to perform and break out of the cycle of poverty. As a father and a former educator, Baltimore County Executive John Olszewski is committed to ensuring each and every student has their fundamental needs met.

Senate Bill 557 would significantly expand the availability of free meals to students by requiring that schools which participate in either the federal School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch program offer free breakfast and lunch to all students at no cost. If passed, this legislation would change the lives of students across the State who struggle with food insecurity. This is a significant step towards eliminating the barriers that keep Maryland’s students from reaching their full potential.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 557. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at [jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov).

# **Testimony SB557 - Breakfast and Lunch Programs – U**

Uploaded by: Elizabeth Marchetta

Position: FAV

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Brandon M. Scott**  
Mayor, City of Baltimore

**Jhonneta A. Richardson**  
Chair, Baltimore City Board  
of School Commissioners

**Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises**  
Chief Executive Officer

## **Testimony to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee in Support of Senate Bill 557: Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion**

February 22, 2023

The Baltimore City Public School System (City Schools) supports Senate Bill 557, which seeks to significantly increase the availability of free breakfast and lunch for students statewide. As a longtime provider of universal meals, City Schools has seen firsthand the positive impact of ensuring students have the nutrition they need to learn throughout the day.

Prior to 2015, City Schools relied on the collection of meal application forms in order for students to receive free meals. Since 2015, however, all City Schools students have been able to eat free breakfast and lunch through USDA’s Community Eligibility Program (CEP). In the year after the district implemented universal free meals, lunch participation increased by 10,000 meals per day. At present, City Schools has an enrollment of more than 75,000 students and, on a daily basis, serves approximately 86,000 meals.

Baltimore City represents one of the state’s four CEP districts. In a study of CEP implementation, researchers at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health compared like schools in Baltimore City and Montgomery County and found that the odds of being in a food insecure household were twice as likely for students attending CEP-eligible, but not participating schools (in Montgomery County) than for students attending CEP schools (in Baltimore City).<sup>i</sup> While the research yielded clear reasons why students ought to have access to free meals in the school setting<sup>ii</sup>, at the most basic level, food is as essential as textbooks in supporting student learning.

Given the inextricable ties between eating habits, healthy behaviors and overall student wellness, City Schools respectfully urges a favorable committee report for Senate Bill 557.

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<sup>i</sup> Full paper: [Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition](#)

<sup>ii</sup> [School-Meals-are-Essential-Health-and-Learning.pdf \(frac.org\)](#)

“Students who participate in school breakfast programs have improved attendance, behavior, academic performance, and academic achievement as well as decreased tardiness...”

JAMA: Liu et al. (2021); Trends in Food Sources and Diet Quality Among US Children and Adults, 2003-2018

Diet quality for foods from schools improved significantly, especially after 2010, and equitably across subgroups; by 2017-2018, food consumed at schools had the highest quality, followed by food from grocery stores, other sources, worksites, and restaurants.

[Impact of The Community Eligibility Provision of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act on Student Nutrition, Behavior, and Academic Outcomes: 2011–2019 | AJPH | Vol. 110 Issue 9 \(aphapublications.org\)](#)

“There is strong evidence of benefits of UFM for meal participation rates; promising evidence for benefits for weight outcomes, food security, disciplinary referrals, and on-time grade promotion; and mixed evidence of impacts for test scores and attendance.”

**20230220 HSFM MCCPTA testimony SB557.pdf**

Uploaded by: Fania Yangarber

Position: FAV

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB557

*Senate Budget & Taxation Committee*

February 22, 2023

**I am Fania Yangarber, Executive Director of Healthy School Food Maryland®. I am testifying on behalf of the over 6,000 parents whom we represent across Maryland, and I am also testifying on behalf of Chelsi Lewis, Chair of the Food & Nutrition Subcommittee of the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations (MCCPTA).**

We strongly support **SB557**, which aims to expand access to school meals by providing state funds to cover the cost of school breakfast and school lunch for all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought increased attention to the unacceptably high number of Maryland families that struggle with food insecurity, a number which has remained alarmingly elevated over the past three years. As hundreds of thousands of Maryland children and families continue down the long road to recovery from the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, there has never been a more important time to make significant investments in the school meal programs.

Extensive research has linked participation in school meals to many benefits:

- improved academic achievement, standardized test scores, and cognitive function<sup>1 2 3</sup>;
- improved attendance, which is positively linked to academic achievement<sup>4 5</sup>;
- reduced food insecurity, which is linked to poor academic outcomes<sup>6</sup>;
- improved nutrition, such as increased consumption of fruit, vegetables, and milk<sup>7</sup>;
- improved overall health and long-term health outcomes, as well as reduction in obesity rates, anxiety, and depression<sup>8 9</sup>.

The expansion of free school meals to all students is critical in addressing the lack of access to healthy food in schools that students in elementary through high schools have been dealing with for many years. Providing free

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<sup>1</sup> Vaisman, N., Voet, H., Akivis, A., & Vakil, E., (1996). Effects of Breakfast Timing on Cognitive Functions of Elementary School Students. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8859144/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ptomey, L. T., Steger, F. L., Schubert, M. M., Lee, J., Willis, E. A., Sullivan, D. K., Szabo-Reed, A. N., Washburn, R. A., & Donnelly, J. E. (2016). Breakfast intake and composition is associated with superior academic achievement in elementary schoolchildren. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26697955/>.

<sup>3</sup> Frisvold, D. E. (2015). Nutrition and cognitive achievement: an evaluation of the School Breakfast Program. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0047272714002497>.

<sup>4</sup> Murphy, J. M. (2007). Breakfast and learning: an updated review. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638584\\_Breakfast\\_and\\_Learning\\_An\\_Updated\\_Review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638584_Breakfast_and_Learning_An_Updated_Review).

<sup>5</sup> Basch, C. E. (2011). Breakfast and the achievement gap among urban minority youth. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21923876/>.

<sup>6</sup> Huang, J., & Barnidge, E. (2016). Low-income children's participation in the National School Lunch Program and household food insufficiency. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26722983/>.

<sup>7</sup> Clark, M. A., & Fox, M. K. (2009). Nutritional quality of the diets of U.S. public school children and the role of the school meal programs. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19166672/>.

<sup>8</sup> Gundersen, C., Kreider, B., & Pepper, J. (2012). The impact of the National School Lunch Program on child health: a nonparametric bounds analysis. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304407611001205>.

<sup>9</sup> Kleinman, R. E., Hall, S., Green, H., Korzec-Ramirez, D., Patton, K., Pagano, M. E., & Murphy, J. M. (2002). Diet, breakfast, and academic performance in children. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12428078/>.



school meals to all students in a school also helps to reduce stigma around free and reduced meals.

**Marylanders need this investment.**

In our own county, nearly forty percent of our student population qualifies for Free and Reduced Meals. During the first 18 months of the pandemic, **Healthy School Food Maryland®** and **MCCPTA** worked with the Montgomery County Food Security Task Force, coordinated by the Montgomery County Food Council and the Department of Health and Human Services, and with Montgomery County Public Schools to deliver over 100,000 pounds of fresh produce and 70,000 school meals directly to families. Our volunteers interacted directly with these communities, and it was clear that while the access that we were expanding during the most critical months of the pandemic was crucial, the need in the communities was high and didn't end when HFSM's and MCCPTA's intervention did. Consistent access to school meals is the minimum requirement to improve outcomes for underserved communities. **SB557** addresses access, and we believe this is a good beginning to ensuring nutrition security for all of Maryland's school children.

Prior to the pandemic, too many Maryland children were left out of the benefits of access to nutritious food due to the current program structure. For example, to qualify for free school meals, a student's family must be living at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, which translates to annual income of less than \$36,000 for a family of four for the 2021–2022 school year<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, a family of four must have an annual income of around \$52,000 or less to qualify for reduced-price meals. Because the eligibility threshold for these programs is so low, many Maryland families who struggle financially to meet their most basic needs do not qualify, especially given the cost of living in many communities. In Montgomery County, where the area median income in 2020 was \$110,012, a significant number of students would not qualify for free school meals under the current system yet may be facing food insecurity due to the high cost of living and the significant economic and social challenges families face in the aftermath of the pandemic. A 2017 Montgomery County Food Council report revealed that based on the cost of living in Montgomery County, it costs at least \$91,252 for a four-person family to afford the basic necessities, much higher than the \$24,860 Federal Poverty level.<sup>11</sup>

Maryland has made strides in supporting equitable access to school meals by reimbursing additional funds for reduced price meals. Several states—including California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Maine, and Vermont—have taken more significant steps to ensure that access to school meals is something that families can count on, and Maryland should do the same. Providing school meals at no cost to all students and families in the state is a smart and effective investment in Maryland communities. Maryland would be supporting equity in the classroom and making sure every child has the nutrition they need to excel. These meals are just as important to students' academic success as textbooks or transportation and should be treated as a critical component to education. When students are distracted by hunger because they were unable to participate in school breakfast or lunch, they miss out on the chance to learn and benefit from the important opportunities offered by Maryland's education system.

**We strongly urge a favorable report on SB557** to support students, families, schools, and entire communities throughout Maryland.

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2022). Child Nutrition Programs: Income Eligibility Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fr-021622>.

<sup>11</sup> A Food Secure Montgomery County: A 5-Year Strategic Plan (2017). Available at: [https://assets.jhsph.edu/clf/mod\\_clfResource/doc/MoCo\\_Food-Security-Plan\\_2017\\_small.pdf](https://assets.jhsph.edu/clf/mod_clfResource/doc/MoCo_Food-Security-Plan_2017_small.pdf)

**MD Catholic Conference\_SB 557\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: FAV



**MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE**

**February 22, 2023**

**SB 557  
Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal  
Expansion**

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 557. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government. We also offer this testimony on behalf of the families of approximately 50,000 students served by over 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland, as well as the one in every eight Maryland students educated in a nonpublic school, particularly the many whose schools participate in the Federal School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program.

Senate Bill 557 would allow schools participating in the Federal School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program to feed all students a free breakfast or lunch, respectively. The bill would allow the State to subsidize the cost of the free meals not provided through federal funding for both programs. Participating schools would not be authorized to charge any student for meals under either program.

Our nonpublic schools that serve low-income students often operate on very tight budgets. Thus, some that would like to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision Program cannot, due to an inability to afford the cost gap out of the schools' budgets that would be required in order to do so. This legislation might allow more schools to participate in that program and, thus, more kids to be fed, alleviating the burden on parents.

Although Maryland is the wealthiest state in the country, one in eight households in Maryland face constant food insecurity. Sadly, children and adolescents are not exempt from that statistic. School breakfast and lunch programs are essential to not only ending hunger, but for improving the health and educational outcomes of students who live with food insecurity.

Well over 100,000 meals are currently served annually to low-income students in nonpublic schools through these federal programs. This bill purports to ensure that all students in the State of Maryland whose schools participate in the free feeding programs are provided completely free breakfast and lunch, regardless of federal funding limitations. It is for these reasons that the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report for Senate Bill 557.

# **FINAL SB557 Primary and Secondary Education - Univ**

Uploaded by: Grace Wilson

Position: FAV



**SB557 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION – BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAMS –  
UNIVERSAL EXPANSION**

February 22, 2023

BUDGET AND TAXATION

**SUPPORT**

Grace Wilson, Legislative & Policy Specialist (410.440.1758)

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports **SB557 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion**. This bill alters the standards of the State Free Feeding Program to require that beginning in fiscal year 2025, any student in a public school system receive either a federally approved school meal or a state funded free meal if the district participates in the United States Department of Agriculture’s School Meals Program. This bill also forbids school systems from charging a student for any portion of such a meal beginning in fiscal year 2025, and requires that the State reimburse the county boards of education for the student’s share of the meal. Further, the bill states that it is the intent of the General Assembly that the State, each county board, and participating nonpublic schools maximize the use of all available federal funds in carrying out the requirements of the State Free Feeding Program.

AACPS recognizes the importance of developing a healthy school environment which promotes student health, well-being, and the ability to learn. Healthy school environments meet nutrition standards and guidelines for food and beverages available on school campus in accordance with State and federal laws and regulations which promote food comprised of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein. Free and nutritious meals for all students allow them to stay fueled, ready to learn, and out of the school nurse’s office.

During the 2021-2022 school year, AACPS offered free school meals to all students and served 41,000 school lunches a day. Currently during the 2022-2023 school year, free school meals are no longer available to all students, and AACPS is serving 32,000 school lunches a day. Students who ate with us last year are choosing not to do so this school year. This bill would allow approximately 9,000 students to eat school meals again, free of charge, thus enabling them to better learn and succeed.

AACPS supports this bill that would provide free school meals to all students and ensures that all AACPS students are fueled and best prepared to engage in educational experiences. Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on SB557.

**2023-02-22 SB 557 (Support).pdf**

Uploaded by: Hannibal Kemerer

Position: FAV

**ANTHONY G. BROWN**  
*Attorney General*



**CANDACE McLAREN LANHAM**  
*Chief of Staff*

**CAROLYN A. QUATTROCKI**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**STATE OF MARYLAND**  
**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

FACSIMILE NO.  
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WRITER'S DIRECT DIAL NO.  
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February 22, 2023

**TO:** The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee

**FROM:** Hannibal G. Williams II Kemerer  
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

**RE:** SB0557 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch  
Programs – Universal Expansion (Support)

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The Office Attorney supports Senate Bill 557, Chair Guzzone's bill to universally expand the State's Free Feeding Program in primary and secondary education beginning in fiscal year 2025. The results are in: among the studies examining universal free school lunches (with or without breakfast), positive associations were generally observed with students' diet quality and academic performance, particularly in the presence of strong nutrition standards that include fruits, vegetables, and/or whole grains.<sup>1</sup> In that same NIH study, findings consistently show student participation in school meal programs increases when meals are provided at no cost.<sup>2</sup> Further, the increase in participation tends to be largest among students who previously did not qualify for free or reduced-price meals.<sup>3</sup>

Universal school meals seek to improve the nutritional quality of children's diets and reduce food insecurity.<sup>4</sup> These programs have both direct and indirect benefits. Direct benefits include that these school meals may improve children's diets directly by providing healthy foods (i.e., fruits, vegetables, whole grains, etc.).<sup>5</sup> Indirect benefits include that healthy school meal

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen, J. F. W., Hecht, A. A., McLoughlin, G. M., Turner, L., & Schwartz, M. B. (2021). Universal School Meals and Associations with Student Participation, Attendance, Academic Performance, Diet Quality, Food Security, and Body Mass Index: A Systematic Review. *Nutrients*, 13(3), 911. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13030911>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> Cullen K.W., Chen T.-A. The contribution of the USDA school breakfast and lunch program meals to student daily dietary intake. *Prev. Med. Rep.* 2017;5:82–85. doi: 10.1016/j.pmedr.2016.11.016.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

This bill letter is a statement of the Office of Attorney General's policy position on the referenced pending legislation. For a legal or constitutional analysis of the bill, Members of the House and Senate should consult with the Counsel to the General Assembly, Sandy Brantley. She can be reached at 410-946-5600 or sbrantley@oag.state.md.us

consumption is associated with decreased intake of less healthy foods outside of school, potentially attributable to increased satiety from nutrient dense, high fiber school meals.<sup>6</sup>

Critics may argue that there can be adverse impacts on children's Body Mass Index (BMI). However, if healthier meals are provided by schools, they may reduce the risk of obesity to the extent that they replace less nutritionally balanced foods with higher quality school meals.<sup>7</sup> Evidence suggesting school meals are on average healthier than lunches brought from home supports this theory.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, due to the reduction in time spent processing applications for free and reduced-price meals, cafeteria staff time was redirected to improving meal quality, nutrition education, and staff development, which can further the positive influence on students' dietary behaviors.<sup>9</sup>

For all of the foregoing reasons, the Office of Attorney General supports a favorable report on SB 557.

cc: Committee Members

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<sup>6</sup> Cohen J.F., Findling M.T.G., Rosenfeld L., Smith L., Rimm E.B., Hoffman J.A. The impact of 1 year of healthier school food policies on students' diets during and outside of the school day. *J. Acad. Nutr Diet.* 2018;118:2296–2301. doi: 10.1016/j.jand.2018.07.009.

<sup>7</sup> Kenney E.L., Barrett J.L., Bleich S.N., Ward Z.J., Cradock A.L., Gortmaker S.L. Impact Of The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act On Obesity Trends: Study examines impact of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 on childhood obesity trends. *Health Aff.* 2020;39:1122–1129. doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00133.

<sup>8</sup> Fox M.K., Gearan E., Cabili C., Dotter D., Niland K., Washburn L., Paxton N., Olsho L., LeClair L., Tran V. School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study Final Report Volume 4: Student Participation, Satisfaction, Plate Waste, and Dietary Intakes. [(accessed on 1 March 2020)]; *Math. Policy Res.* 2019 Mar 1; Available online: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/SNMCS-Volume4.pdf>.

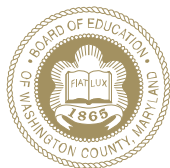
<sup>9</sup> Robinson R.A. *Food Assistance: Early Results of USDA's No-Fee School Meal Pilot Program*. Government Accountability Office (GAO); Washington, DC, USA: 1994. Report to U.S.



**SB 557 (final) 2-22-23.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jamie Brown

Position: FAV



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**BILL:** Senate Bill 557  
**TITLE:** Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion  
**HEARING DATE:** February 22, 2023 (Budget and Taxation Committee)  
**POSITION:** FAVORABLE  
**COMMITTEES:** Budget and Taxation  
Education, Energy, and Environment  
**CONTACT:** Ms. Patricia Ursprung, Deputy Legal Counsel (301-766-2946)

The Washington County Board of Education (WCBOE) supports House Bill 628, which would provide free breakfast and lunch for all students attending public schools in Maryland that participate in the federal free and reduced-price meals programs, regardless of the family’s eligibility for the programs. This bill will benefit families by eliminating the financial burden of purchasing school meals for their children, especially for those families whose income only slightly exceeds the eligibility requirements for the federal programs, or who otherwise qualify but fail to complete the necessary application. It will also benefit schools by eliminating, or greatly reducing, indebtedness attributable to unpaid and outstanding school meals accounts that, in many cases, is never collected.

In his State of the State, Governor Moore announced his administration’s goal to end childhood poverty, and to do it now. This bill is aligned with that goal by eliminating costs associated with school meals for families attending Maryland schools. Currently, school breakfast in Washington County costs \$1.55 and lunch at the elementary level is \$2.35, while secondary students pay \$2.60. Therefore, a family who is ineligible for free or reduced-price meals would pay either \$3.90 or \$4.15 per day for their child to eat school-provided breakfast and lunch. If that student attends school for all 180 school days, the total annual cost is \$702 or \$747, depending on the grade level.

A family of three is eligible for reduced price meals if they have an annual gross income of no more than \$42,606. This means a family with a monthly income, before taxes, of approximately \$3,552 would not be eligible for reduced-priced meals and could spend \$83 per month on school meals if their child is at the secondary level, and \$78 for an elementary student. These costs are in addition to other monthly expenses facing the family, such as increasing food costs at home, housing expenses, utilities, etc. While \$78 may not seem like much, it is a burden for many of our families, meaning students either go hungry or the family goes into arrears with the school system, as we never deny a child food.

For those families who do go into arrears, it is difficult for the school to collect on the outstanding indebtedness. Currently, families are indebted to WCBOE in excess of \$23,000 for school meals. That total will certainly continue to grow, but it is expected that, at most, only a small portion of that indebtedness will be collected. This bill benefits schools by eliminating the need to act as a collection agency and devote staff time and resources to attempting to collect outstanding balances from families. In the most extreme cases, it prevents the school system from being in the unenviable position of deciding if they should send accounts to a collection agency, which would be harmful for the family and the school’s relationship with them. It also ensures that none of the funds in an already tight budget will need to be diverted to cover outstanding food debts. The amount of uncollected debt must be supported entirely by local educational funds because federal law does not allow the school meals enterprise funds to absorb bad debts as a cost.

Given the benefit this will have for all families attending Washington County Public Schools, especially those experiencing financial struggles, WCBOE respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 628.  
Thank you.

cc: Washington County Board of Education Members  
Washington County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly  
Dr. David T. Sovine, Superintendent  
Dr. Jennifer Webster, Associate Superintendent for Administration and Leadership  
Dr. Gary Willow, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction  
Mr. Jeffrey Proulx, Chief Operating Officer  
Ms. Ilissa Ramm, Chief Legal Counsel  
Mr. Michael Embly, Supervisor of Food and Nutrition Services  
Mr. John Woolums, Director of Governmental Relations, Maryland Association of Boards of Education  
Ms. Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland

# **Holy Cross Health Support for HB 628 and SB 557[95**

Uploaded by: Jenna McGreevy

Position: FAV

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 628/SB 557**  
**Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal  
Expansion**  
*House Ways and Means Committee/Senate Budget & Taxation Committee*  
February 20, 2023

Holy Cross Health strongly supports HB 628/SB 557, which seeks to expand universal breakfast and lunch programs in primary and secondary schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program throughout the state.

As a healthcare provider, we know that access to healthy and nutritious meals is critical to the health and well-being of children. Unfortunately, food insecurity is a serious issue across the state and was identified as a priority in our most recent community health needs assessment. By expanding universal breakfast and lunch programs, we can help to ensure that all children in Maryland have access to healthy meals. This will improve not only their physical health but also their academic performance, as well-nourished children are better able to concentrate and learn.

Moreover, we know that food insecurity is a social determinant of health that can contribute to various health issues, including chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. By addressing this issue through expanded school meal programs, we can help prevent these health problems and promote better health outcomes for Maryland's children.

Although Maryland has one of the highest household incomes in the United States, many Marylanders need this investment. For example, a family of four must have an annual income of around \$36,000 or less for free meals and around \$52,000 or less to qualify for reduced-price meals. However, the average self-sufficiency standard in Maryland for the same size family averages more than \$72,800. Too many Maryland families struggle financially to meet their most basic needs and yet do not qualify because their income exceeds this incredibly low eligibility threshold.

By providing school meals at no cost to all students, Maryland would support equity in the classroom and ensure every child has the nutrition they need to excel. These meals are important to students' academic success, just as textbooks or transportation are, and should be treated as a critical component of education. When students are distracted by hunger because they cannot afford school breakfast or lunch, they miss out on the chance to learn and benefit from the important opportunities offered by Maryland's education system. Hungry kids can't learn.

Ensuring every child in the state has access to a nutritious school breakfast and lunch daily is a smart and effective investment in Maryland's communities and future. As a long-standing anchor institution, Holy Cross Health is committed to the health and well-being of our community. As such, we thank you for your consideration and urge a favorable report on HB 628/SB 557.

# **WDC 2023 Testimony\_SB0557\_Final.pdf**

Uploaded by: JoAnne Koravos

Position: FAV



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

[www.womensdemocraticclub.org](http://www.womensdemocraticclub.org)

**Senate Bill 557**  
**Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion**  
**Budget and Taxation Committee – February 22, 2023**  
**SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2023 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic Clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

**WDC urges the passage of SB0557.** This bill aims to provide state funding to expand access to free school breakfast and lunch to all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought increased attention to the unacceptably high number of Maryland families that struggle with food insecurity, especially among communities of color, with Black and Latino families with children reporting food insecurity twice as often as White households.<sup>i</sup> This bill requiring universal meals for all students will create an equal playing field and will help reduce food insecurity for thousands of students.

In addition to addressing the immediate need to reduce child hunger, universal free school meals are an essential investment for the health and academic success of Maryland students. Children who are hungry lack focus which results in poor academic performance. For example, food insecure children show smaller gains in math and reading achievement between kindergarten and third grade, and, from ages six to eleven, face a higher likelihood of repeating a grade, according to a report by the Governor's Office for Children.<sup>ii</sup> There is also strong research tying school meal participation to several positive outcomes for children, including: improved proficiency on standardized tests, reduced chronic absenteeism, and fewer disciplinary concerns.<sup>iii</sup>

Numerous studies show that school meals are not only crucial for children's cognitive development but are also critical to overall health and wellness of children.<sup>iv</sup> School meals programs support and improve student physical and mental health, including weight-related outcomes. For instance, school meal programs have been shown to reduce rates of poor health by at least 29 percent and rates of obesity by at least 17 percent, based on estimates using national data.<sup>v</sup> Data also shows an association between school breakfast participation and lower body mass index (BMI) and positive impacts on mental health, including reductions in behavioral problems, anxiety, and depression.<sup>vi</sup>

However, as vital as school meals are to ensuring students have access to healthy, nutritious meals, too many children in need are left out due to the current program structure. To qualify for free school meals, a student's family must be living at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, which translates to annual income of less than \$36,000 for a family of four for the 2021– 2022 school year.<sup>vii</sup> Similarly, a family of four must have an



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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[www.womensdemocraticclub.org](http://www.womensdemocraticclub.org)

annual income of around \$52,000 or less to qualify for reduced-price meals. Because the eligibility threshold for these programs is so low, many Maryland families who struggle financially to meet their most basic needs do not qualify. Since 2020, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) provided waivers to schools across the country, allowing them to serve free school meals to all students. Those waivers have now expired and a critical nutritional resource for children and families as they continue to experience economic hardship has come to an end. As Maryland begins to recover from the economic, social, and health impacts of the pandemic, the ability to serve all students nutritious meals, regardless of income eligibility, needs to continue and SB0557 proposes to do just that.

We need to remove barriers for all Maryland students to ensure their potential is not limited by hunger. By providing school meals at no cost to all students, Maryland would be supporting equity in the classroom and making sure every child has the nutrition they need in order to excel. These meals are important to students' academic success just as textbooks or transportation are and should be treated as a critical component to education. Adding state funding to provide school meals in these schools at no cost to students is the perfect complement to the educational investments already made by the Blueprint Bill, supporting both schools and communities by eliminating school meal debt and the burden that it places on school systems, families, and children.

Passing this bill will ensure that every child in the state has access to a nutritious school breakfast and lunch every day, which is a smart and effective investment in Maryland's communities and future. Thank you for your consideration.

**We ask for your support for SB0557 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.**

Diana E. Conway  
WDC President

Tazeen Ahmad  
WDC Advocacy Committee

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.ipr.northwestern.edu/news/2020/food-insecurity-by-race-ethnicity.html>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://goc.maryland.gov/childhood-hunger/#\\_ftnref1](https://goc.maryland.gov/childhood-hunger/#_ftnref1)

<sup>iii</sup> Ending Childhood Hunger: A Social Impact Analysis, [bestpractices.nokidhungry.org](http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org)

<sup>iv</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021 "Childhood Nutrition Facts"

<sup>v</sup> Gundersen, C., Kreider, B., & Pepper, J. (2012). The impact of the National School Lunch Program on child health: a nonparametric bounds analysis. *Journal of Econometrics*, 166, 79–91.

<sup>vi</sup> <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/School-Meals-are-Essential-Health-and-Learning.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2022). Child Nutrition Programs: Income Eligibility Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fr-021622>.



# **SB 557 State Funding for Universal School Breakfast**

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: FAV

**BILL:** Senate Bill 557  
**TITLE:** Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT  
**DATE:** February 22, 2023  
**COMMITTEE:** Budget and Taxation  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's boards of education, supports Senate Bill 557, which will ensure state reimbursement of local school system costs to provide universal access to school breakfasts and lunches for all students.

MABE recognizes the importance of developing healthy school environments, which includes providing high quality health and physical education programs as well as meeting the nutritional needs of students through school breakfasts, lunches, and afterschool meals. Thousands of children from low-income households in Maryland depend on school meals for the nutrition they need to learn and grow. Unfortunately, for too long too many children and families have not taken advantage of school meal programs for reasons ranging from the cumbersome paperwork requirements to the stigma associated with participating. Fortunately, today Maryland has transitioned to using the already available Medicaid data to accurately determine the students eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

Federal and state standards for school nutrition continue to be reformed and enhanced to address the national epidemics of juvenile diabetes and obesity. At the same time, child hunger and inequitable access to healthy meals impacts far too many students as an obstacle to learning. Therefore, MABE also supports federal legislation and actions by the federal government to improve and increase funding for expanded access to high quality school meal programs.

Early in the pandemic, Congress gave the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) the authority to issue child nutrition waivers so that schools systems could adapt their meal programs to provide meals to students even as buildings were closed. These child nutrition waivers were to expire on June 30, 2022 which would have resulted in discontinuing breakfast, lunch and afterschool meal options for millions of students. MABE joined other state and national organizations in urging Congress to extend the child nutrition waivers so that school systems could continue to receive the federal reimbursements for the meals they serve. Thankfully, President Joe Biden signed the Keep Kids Fed Act to extend partial school meal flexibilities through the 2022-2023 school year five days before they were set to expire. However, in the absence of federal action, moving forward into FY 2024 and the 2023-2024 school year Maryland must lead by investing additional state funding to ensure the continued availability of universal access to school breakfasts and lunches for all students across the state.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 557.

# **MD Hunger Solutions - Support for SB 557 - Breakfa**

Uploaded by: Julia Gross

Position: FAV



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 557

Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

*Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee*

February 22, 2023

**Maryland Hunger Solutions strongly supports SB 557**, which aims to provide state funding for schools operating the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program to provide a healthy school breakfast and school lunch to all children at no cost to them or their families.

As a statewide, non-partisan, nonprofit working to end hunger in Maryland, Maryland Hunger Solutions strives to overcome existing barriers to state and federal nutrition assistance programs and create self-sustaining connections between Maryland residents and nutritious foods.

Among these nutrition programs, the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program play the most critical role as the nation's first line of defense against childhood food insecurity.

School meals have been shown to be some of the healthiest meals many children consume on a daily basis, providing students with nutrition they need to learn and thrive during the school day and beyond. [Multiple studies have linked participation in school meals to an incredible number of beneficial outcomes for students](#) including reduced food insecurity, decreased rates of obesity, and improved overall nutrition and wellness. Beyond reducing hunger, this research also links participation in school meals to positive educational outcomes such as enhanced child development and school readiness, and improved academic achievement, attendance, and classroom behavior.

During the past two school years, federally funded free school meals served as a critical resource to keep children fed, alleviate child hunger, advance racial equity, and promote child well-being during a time of extreme uncertainty. The role that school meals played during the pandemic and school closures highlights the importance of this nutritional safety net to the health of Maryland communities.

**The loss of federal pandemic-related funding for free school meals this year has been devastating for Maryland students and families**, especially at a time when historically high inflation and grocery prices are driving the need for these programs higher than ever. Across the state, just over half of Maryland students, or around 473,000 children, have lost access to this benefit and are now required to pay for their school meals.

Maryland has made great strides in the past that have helped to mitigate the impact of this loss, such as covering the reduced-price copay for low-income families, and expanding the number of students directly certified for free meals through Medicaid data matching. However, families and school systems are still facing immense challenges with the return to a tiered payment system.

While the free and reduced-price meal program exists to ensure low-income children receive the nutritional support they need, many families who struggle to meet their most basic needs do not apply or even qualify for this program.



**Too many children who qualify for free school meals fall through the cracks due to stigma and administrative barriers.** When school meals are perceived as a resource only for children from low-income households, many students decline to participate, despite their hunger. Additional obstacles such as language barriers and misinformation about the program also keep many eligible families from submitting school meal applications.

**Additionally, the extremely low eligibility threshold excludes many more families.** For example, a family of four living off of just \$52,000 a year is unable to qualify for any assistance. With Maryland's already high cost of living and current inflation rates, more families than ever are struggling to make ends meet but are still unable to qualify for assistance.

Students and families are not the only ones facing these challenges. Because so many families struggle to pay for school meals, **school systems are reporting unprecedented increases in school meal debt this school year**, forcing them to spend valuable time and resources trying to locate additional funds to cover their operating costs, which are often redirected from general funds that would have otherwise supported educational programming and other important wraparound services.

**The solution to these challenges is clear.** Providing healthy school meals to all students at no cost was a proven success during the pandemic and in the 357 Maryland schools using the federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to continue providing school meals for free to all students, including every school in Baltimore City, Somerset County, Dorchester County, and Wicomico County.

CEP provides federal reimbursement for schools that have high poverty rates that are directly certified from other federal programs. Research provided by Dr. Susan Gross of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health on the implementation of the CEP in Maryland clearly shows that this universal meals program not only helps students and schools, but helps to reduce food insecurity in the community.

Offering free school meals to all students results in more children eating breakfast and lunch at school, allowing families to stretch their food budgets at home, and removing the burden of school meal debt from families and school systems. By passing and enacting SB 557, Maryland will be making an important step in advancing equity, supporting students' education and health, and improving school nutrition operations.

Our national partner organization, the Food Research and Action Center, has been working with schools and states all across the nation as they work to implement healthy school meal programs. From Maine to California, from Colorado to Minnesota. Maryland is among other states working to make investments in the health and nutrition of our children.

**Hungry children can't wait.** Now is the time for our state to act on this opportunity to make the smart investment in our children and Maryland's future.

Thank you for your consideration. Maryland Hunger Solutions respectfully urges a favorable report on SB 557.

# **SB557\_TestimonySupport\_CapitalAreaFoodBank\_2.22.23**

Uploaded by: Julia Lemp

Position: FAV

**Julia Lemp, Advocacy and Public Policy Specialist, Capital Area Food Bank  
SB557 – Universal School Meals  
Budget and Taxation Committee  
Hearing Date 2/22/2023 at 1pm  
Testimony of SUPPORT**

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Chair Guzzone and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Capital Area Food Bank, we offer our support for SB557 to provide universal school meals to all Maryland students.

The Capital Area Food Bank serves over 200,000 food insecure residents in the two largest counties in Maryland, Prince George's and Montgomery. Last year, we distributed over 23 million meals to Maryland clients through a partner network of over 180 nonprofit organizations and more than 150 direct distribution sites.

Each year, the Capital Area Food Bank releases a Hunger Report – a comprehensive study that looks at food insecurity across the food bank's service area. One key finding from our 2022 Hunger Report was that Households with children are twice as likely to be affected by food insecurity. Survey results revealed that 49% of all households with children across the region experienced food insecurity at some point during the last year, as opposed to only 25% of households without children.

Households with young people have long been overrepresented among those served by the food bank. For parents and grandparents raising children and young adults in a region with a high cost of living, budgets can easily become stretched, and data tell us that when resources are tight, food is frequently one of the first things to be cut back.

That's why the food bank operates out-of-school and summer meal distributions, to help support families in getting the meals and groceries they need to thrive. However, we also know many of the families we serve rely on in-school meals, both school breakfasts and lunches, as a reliable, healthy source of food for their children.

During the 2020 and 2021 school years, USDA provided waivers to schools across the country, allowing school meals to be served at no cost to all students. However, these waivers have ended, and schools have reverted back to previous payment structures. This means students are going without the meals they need to focus on their education, maintain healthy happy lifestyles, and support their overall well-being.

Maryland must support students in ensuring they have the foods they need to thrive, especially during school time. We strongly encourage a favorable report on SB557, and welcome any questions from the committee. Thank you.

**2023\_SB557\_MSDETestimony\_Support\_WRITTEN\_FINAL.pdf**

Uploaded by: Justin Dayhoff

Position: FAV





**Mohammed Choudhury**  
State Superintendent of Schools

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<b>BILL:</b>	Senate Bill (SB) 557	<b>DATE:</b>	February 22, 2023
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion	<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	Budget and Taxation
<b>POSITION:</b>	Support		
<b>CONTACT:</b>	Justin Dayhoff 410-767-0449 <a href="mailto:justin.dayhoff@maryland.gov">justin.dayhoff@maryland.gov</a>		

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The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) enthusiastically supports Senate Bill (SB) 557 – *Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion*. This bill answers the national outcry to effectively continue the Universal Free Meals program that existed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The federal Universal Free Meals program shed light on the importance and impact of ensuring that all children have access to free meals. However, despite expanded efforts to better identify student poverty, existing measures still fall short of fully capturing eligible students and, as a result (and with the sunset of the federal universal meals program), students are again going without necessary food and nutrition services. Given the direct impact on educational services and student poverty, particularly for students who may not have access to healthy meals at home, this bill could have a profound impact on educational outcomes, particularly for students who live in circumstances of poverty.

Additionally, MSDE estimates current unpaid meal debt incurred by students and families to be more than \$750,000 based on a June 2021 survey conducted by MSDE’s Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs. Students and families will not incur additional debt if Senate Bill 557 is enacted, as drafted.

MSDE respectfully requests that you consider this letter of support as you deliberate Senate Bill 557. Please contact Justin Dayhoff, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Financial Planning, Operations, and Strategy by phone at 410-767-0439, or by email at [justin.dayhoff@maryland.gov](mailto:justin.dayhoff@maryland.gov) for additional information.

**SB0557.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kaitlin Fraer

Position: FAV

Wednesday, February 22, 2023

SB0557/HB0628

**Favorable**



Honorable Committee Members -

We, the Education Association of St. Mary's County urge you to move forward with HB0628 and SB0557 to support Universal Breakfast and Lunch for school students. As educators, we know the significance of students having access to breakfast and lunch in school- we have seen the impact free meals had on students prior to this year. Providing equal access to free school meals ensures every child is nourished and ready to learn.

When districts returned to paid meals this year, it significantly burdened families still struggling to make ends meet. With increased food and labor costs, school districts across the state will be forced to increase meal prices next year. Families with multiple children are already struggling with the increased prices of groceries, gas, and other necessities; it's time we give these families the help they need. While the school meal application process works for most families, the application form only collects income data. It does not accurately reflect all families' constraints with rent increases, medical bills, and increased utility bills.

We know students cannot learn when hungry, which is why the Maryland Meals for Achievement program has helped millions of students start their days with a healthy breakfast. With National School Breakfast Week around the corner, we urge this committee to vote in favor of this important initiative to provide free breakfast and lunch for millions more students across the state of Maryland.

Thank you for your time,

Kaitlin Fraer & Elaine Deems

Legislative Committee Chairs

Education Association of St. Mary's County

**SB 557\_MD Center on Economic Policy\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kali Schumitz

Position: FAV

# Ensuring That School Children are Provided Healthy Breakfast and Lunch Meals is Both Morally and Economically Sound Public Policy

*Position Statement Supporting Senate Bill 557*

**Given before the Senate Budget and Taxation and Education, Energy, and the Environment Committees**

In an unparalleled time of uncertainty for families across our state, ensuring that the most vulnerable persons in our population, children, have their basic nutritional needs met is both morally and economically efficient for all Marylanders. Expanding access to breakfast and lunch meals for students with state funds that would cover those cost for ALL students, in schools that participate in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast program, is good public policy. It would also help to provide some economic security for low-income Maryland families already struggling to put food on the table. For these reasons, **the Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports Senate Bill 557.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought increased attention to the unacceptably high number of Maryland families that struggle with food insecurity, a number which has remained alarmingly high over the past three years. As hundreds of thousands of Maryland children and families continue down the long road to recovery from the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, there has never been a more important time to make significant investments in the school meal programs.

Extensive research has linked participation in school meals to a number of benefits:

- improved academic achievement, standardized test scores, and cognitive function<sup>i ii iii</sup>;
- improved attendance, which is positively linked to academic achievement<sup>iv v</sup>;
- reduced food insecurity, which is linked to poor academic outcomes<sup>vi</sup>;
- improved nutrition, such as increased consumption of fruit, vegetables, and milk<sup>vii</sup>;
- improved overall health and long-term health outcomes, as well as reduction in obesity rates, anxiety, and depression<sup>viii ix</sup>.

Marylanders need this investment. During the 2020 and 2021 school years, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has provided waivers to schools across the country, allowing school meals to be served at no cost to all students across the country, ensuring that every student had access to these important benefits. However, now that these waivers have ended, we have returned to a tiered payment system that has historically left too many children out by allowing them to fall through the cracks. For example, to qualify for free school meals, a student's family must be living at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, which translates to annual income of less than \$36,000 for a family of four for

the 2021–2022 school year. Similarly, a family of four must have an annual income of around \$52,000 or less to qualify for reduced-price meals. With the cost of living on the rise, there are too many Maryland families who struggle financially to meet their most basic needs and yet do not qualify because their income exceeds this incredibly low eligibility threshold.

By providing school meals at no cost to all students, Maryland would be supporting equity in the classroom and making sure every child has the nutrition they need in order to excel. These meals are just as important to students' academic success as textbooks or transportation and should be treated as a critical component of education. When students are distracted by hunger because they were unable to participate in school breakfast or lunch, they miss out on the chance to learn and benefit from the important opportunities offered by Maryland's education system.

Hungry kids can't learn. Ensuring that every child in the state has access to a nutritious school breakfast and lunch every day is a smart and effective investment in Maryland's communities and future.

As such, **the Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully requests that the House Ways and Means give a favorable report to Senate Bill 557.** We thank you for your consideration.

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## Equity Impact Analysis: Senate Bill 557

### *Bill summary*

Senate Bill 557 would expand access to school meals by providing state funds to cover the cost of school breakfast and school lunch for all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program and provides the reimbursement rate at which the State will pay county boards and participating nonpublic schools for the meals offered to students.

### *Background*

At the height of the pandemic, during the 2020 and 2021 school years, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) provided waivers to schools across the country including Maryland, allowing school meals to be served at no cost to all students across the country, ensuring that every student had access to these important benefits. However, now that these waivers have ended, we have returned to a tiered payment system that has historically left too many children out by allowing them to fall through the cracks.

### *Equity Implications*

Data shows that school meals play an effective role in alleviating poverty and food insecurity, supporting good nutrition, boosting learning, and improving health outcomes. However, nearly 60 percent of children just above the cutoff for free school meals are children of color<sup>x</sup>. Healthy School Meals for All can serve as a critical tool to fight to achieve racial equity, improving educational and health outcomes for students, particularly Black and Latinx students, by allowing schools to offer breakfast and lunch to all students at no cost. Black and Latinx children across the U.S. have historically experienced food insecurity at a disproportionately high rate, a trend that continues today. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [found](#) that in 2019–2020, 18.8 percent of Black children and 15.7 percent of Latinx children lived in food-insecure households, compared to 6.5 percent of white children<sup>xi</sup>. Although not measured by the CDC, research indicates that food insecurity among [Indigenous](#) people and certain [Asian American and Pacific Islander](#) ethnic subgroups is also significantly higher than average.

## Impact

Senate Bill 577 would likely **improve racial and economic equity** in Maryland.

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<sup>i</sup> Vaisman, N., Voet, H., Akivis, A., & Vakil, E., (1996). Effects of Breakfast Timing on Cognitive Functions of Elementary School Students. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8859144/>.

<sup>ii</sup> Ptomey, L. T., Steger, F. L., Schubert, M. M., Lee, J., Willis, E. A., Sullivan, D. K., Szabo-Reed, A. N., Washburn, R. A., & Donnelly, J. E. (2016).

Breakfast intake and composition is associated with superior academic achievement in elementary schoolchildren. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26697955/>.

<sup>iii</sup> Frisvold, D. E. (2015). Nutrition and cognitive achievement: an evaluation of the School Breakfast Program. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0047272714002497>.

<sup>iv</sup> Murphy, J. M. (2007). Breakfast and learning: an updated review. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638584\\_Breakfast\\_and\\_Learning\\_An\\_Updated\\_Review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638584_Breakfast_and_Learning_An_Updated_Review).

<sup>v</sup> Basch, C. E. (2011). Breakfast and the achievement gap among urban minority youth. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21923876/>.

<sup>vi</sup> Huang, J., & Barnidge, E. (2016). Low-income children's participation in the National School Lunch Program and household food insufficiency.

Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26722983/>.

<sup>vii</sup> Clark, M. A., & Fox, M. K. (2009). Nutritional quality of the diets of U.S. public school children and the role of the school meal programs.

Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19166672/>.

<sup>viii</sup> Gundersen, C., Kreider, B., & Pepper, J. (2012). The impact of the National School Lunch Program on child health: a nonparametric bounds analysis. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304407611001205>.

<sup>ix</sup> Kleinman, R. E., Hall, S., Green, H., Korzec-Ramirez, D., Patton, K., Pagano, M. E., & Murphy, J. M. (2002). Diet, breakfast, and academic performance in children. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12428078/>.

<sup>x</sup> Children's Defense Fund. Infographic: Universal School Meals are Essential for Advancing Racial Equity. <https://www.childrensdefense.org/reports/2021/universal-school-meals-infographic/>

<sup>xi</sup> Heidi Ullmann, Ph.D., Julie D. Weeks, Ph.D., and Jennifer H. Madans, Ph.D. Children Living in Households That Experienced Food Insecurity: United States, 2019–2020. National Center for Health Statistics Center for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db432.pdf>

**SB 557\_HorizonFoundation\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kerry Darragh

Position: FAV





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February 22, 2023

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

**BILL:** SB 557 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

**POSITION:** Support

The Horizon Foundation is Howard County's community health foundation and the largest independent health philanthropy in the state of Maryland. We lead community change so everyone in Howard County can live a longer, better life.

**The Foundation is pleased to support SB 557 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion.**

SB 557 would require Maryland schools that participate in the federal School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch Program to offer each student those meals at no cost, beginning in FY 2025. Those meals would also be required to meet nutritional standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for those programs.

Children's food insecurity has been a problem across the nation for many years but became a glaring crisis in the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic when schools – which are many students' primary or only source of healthy food during the day – closed. Rightly so, the federal government granted waivers to schools to offer universal free school lunch to students through the pandemic, and communities across the nation, including Howard County, came together to try and fill the gaps to ensure children did not go hungry. Those pandemic-era waivers have expired, requiring families to qualify for these programs once again based on income.

Like other communities across the state, Howard County families have felt the pain of rising food costs and an increasingly high cost of living. Though we are known as an affluent county, our lower- and middle-income students and their families are at risk of, or are already experiencing, food insecurity. Some of these families who are struggling may not apply for or even qualify for the current free and reduced meals programs. HB 628 would ensure that no student falls through the cracks or has to worry about whether they will have food to eat during the day.

Horizon Foundation Testimony  
SB 557 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and  
Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion  
February 22, 2023

A report last year from the Food Research & Action Center studied 62 large school districts across the country who used universal meal waivers during the pandemic. The findings were clear: 95 percent of districts said meal waivers decreased hunger among their students; 89 percent said the waivers made it easier for parents and guardians; 85 percent said they erased the stigma associated with free school meals; and 82 percent reported that they supported academic achievement.<sup>1</sup> To help our students be healthy and successful, and to ease the burden on families who may be struggling to make ends meet, universal school meals should be made permanent.

Providing healthy school meals has long been a priority for the Horizon Foundation. Years ago, we launched a pilot program with the Howard County Public School System to increase fruit and vegetable offerings and offer more nutritious meals at three elementary schools. That program is now standard in every Howard County school. Students of every age in Howard County and across Maryland deserve healthy food to eat and no child should ever go hungry. For this reason, the Horizon Foundation **SUPPORTS SB 557** and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Food Research & Action Center. Large School District Report 2022: <https://frac.org/large-school-district-report-2022>

**SB0557-BT\_MACo\_SUP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kevin Kinnally

Position: FAV



## **Senate Bill 557**

### *Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

Date: February 22, 2023

From: Brianna January and Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 557. This bill provides much-needed state support to supplement federal aid to provide free meals for all children in Maryland schools. Under SB 557, a school participating in free and reduced meal programs would have to do so universally, regardless of students' socioeconomic situation, with state funding to support these costs.

Research is clear: access to healthy, quality in-school meals improves students' educational experiences and learning performance. Furthermore, need and eligibility for free and reduced meals is growing statewide, as evidenced by recent reporting from the Department of Legislative Services that has uncovered an additional 111,000 students across Maryland who should receive free and reduced school meals.

Counties strongly support providing all of Maryland's students with quality, healthy school meals – and we are proud to collaborate with the federal government to do so. Unfortunately, many school districts aren't financially capable of doing so on their own and federal aid only supports a percentage of students in need.

SB 557 addresses this cost concern, however, by requiring the State to appropriate enough funds annually to reimburse local boards of education for any gaps in federal aid and the actualized costs of providing universal free meals for all students.

In doing so, the SB 557 will help level the playing field for all Maryland students and will eliminate social stigma in school lunchrooms across the state. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 557 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

# **Support AHA SB 557 Healthy School Meals for All.pd**

Uploaded by: Laura Hale

Position: FAV



February 19, 2023

Testimony of Laura Hale

American Heart Association

**Favorable SB 557 Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion**

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Honorable Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the committee today. The American Heart Association extends its strong support for SB 557 Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion. My name is Laura Hale and I am the Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association.

For children to succeed in school, it is essential that they have a healthy lunch and a healthy breakfast. A hungry child cannot learn. We as a state have set forth our priorities on where we will fund and the great wisdom has been made to push our children for academic achievement. We have set forth the task of funding a variety of things to make that better, but the space we currently lag behind is in the feeding of our children. Children cannot succeed without proper nutrition, and we know that for most children they receive up to half of their daily calories from school meals<sup>1</sup>. Research has also found that school meals are the healthiest meals that children receive each day<sup>2</sup>. During the pandemic we provided breakfast and lunch to all children, no questions asked, and it made a difference for families and kids. Now that the federal funding is gone, many children are falling through the cracks. Whether their parents make slightly too much money to qualify, whether forms are not filled out, or because of the stigma<sup>3</sup> of being labeled “the poor kid” children are not eating. We have the opportunity to change all of that with this legislation. We know this legislation works, a meta-analysis published by the NIH noted that when schools offered healthy school meals for all they, “found positive associations with diet quality, food security, and academic performance<sup>4</sup>.” This meta-analysis also outlines positive association in BMI and possibly improves in household income particularly for low-income families<sup>5</sup>.

Families are struggling right now, think of the price of eggs<sup>6</sup> and we as a state have the opportunity to make a difference. Research out of Johns Hopkins showed how much offering free school meals for all made a difference, not only for children, but also for their families. As families who participated in school meals were able to stave off food insecurity or not become more food insecure. It was a key protective factor in making sure Maryland families did not drop deeper into poverty or our middle-class families to

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<sup>1</sup> [School Nutrition Environment | Healthy Schools | CDC](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Trends in Food Sources and Diet Quality Among US Children and Adults, 2003-2018 | Lifestyle Behaviors | JAMA Network Open | JAMA Network](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Participation in the National School Lunch Program: Importance of School-Level and Neighborhood Contextual Factors - Mirtcheva - 2009 - Journal of School Health - Wiley Online Library](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Universal School Meals and Associations with Student Participation, Attendance, Academic Performance, Diet Quality, Food Security, and Body Mass Index: A Systematic Review - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Universal School Meals and Associations with Student Participation, Attendance, Academic Performance, Diet Quality, Food Security, and Body Mass Index: A Systematic Review - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Local Maryland businesses deal with surge of egg prices - CBS Baltimore \(cbsnews.com\)](#)

not fall into poverty<sup>7</sup>. We can choose to leave no one behind, by investing and providing healthy school meals for all.

This legislation is a great equalizer for Maryland children, to start them out on the right foot for good nutrition and to make sure they are fed for success in school. We would never think of charging a child to ride the bus or for textbooks, why would we charge them for lunch or breakfast? A necessity they need to succeed in school.

The American Heart Association urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 557.

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<sup>7</sup> [Pre-pandemic to early-pandemic changes in risk of household food insecurity among Maryland families with children - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

# **Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lu**

Uploaded by: Laura Stewart

Position: FAV



**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland Senate  
Budget and Taxation Committee - For the Hearing on  
Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion (SB 557)  
February 22, 2023  
SUPPORT**

Free State PTA represents over 50,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is composed of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. ***Senate Bill 557, Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion – aligns with Free State PTA's legislative agenda by ensuring children receive nutritional support they need with compassion and dignity, regardless of the ability to pay for school meals. National PTA also supports federal and state funding programs that implement Universal Free School Meals for all students, regardless of income levels.***<sup>1</sup>

Free State PTA strongly supports SB557, which aims to expand access to school meals by providing state funds to cover the cost of school breakfast and school lunch for all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program. This legislation is an essential investment for the health and academic success of Maryland students.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought increased attention to the unacceptably high number of Maryland families that struggle with food insecurity, a number which has remained alarmingly elevated over the past three years. As hundreds of thousands of Maryland children and families continue down the long road to recovery from the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, there has never been a more important time to make significant investments in the school meal programs.

Extensive research has linked participation in school meals to a number of benefits:

- improved academic achievement, standardized test scores, and cognitive function<sup>2</sup>;
- improved attendance, which is positively linked to academic achievement<sup>3</sup>;
- reduced food insecurity, which is linked to poor academic outcomes<sup>4</sup>;
- improved nutrition, such as increased consumption of fruit, vegetables, and milk<sup>5</sup>;
- improved overall health and long-term health outcomes, as well as reduction in obesity rates, anxiety, and depression<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/ptas-positions/Individual-Position-Statements/position-statement---improving-school-meals-program/>

<sup>2</sup> Vaisman, N., Voet, H., Akivis, A., & Vakil, E., (1996). Effects of Breakfast Timing on Cognitive Functions of Elementary School Students. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8859144/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638584\\_Breakfast\\_and\\_Learning\\_An\\_Updated\\_Review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228638584_Breakfast_and_Learning_An_Updated_Review).

<sup>4</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26722983/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19166672/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304407611001205>

Marylanders need this investment. During the 2020 and 2021 school years, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has provided waivers to schools across the country, allowing school meals to be served at no cost to all students across the country, ensuring that every student has access to these important benefits. However, now that these waivers have ended, we have returned to a tiered payment system that leaves too many children out by allowing them to fall through the cracks. For example, to qualify for free school meals, a student's family must be living at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, which translates to annual income of less than \$36,000 for a family of four for the 2021–2022 school year. Similarly, a family of four must have an annual income of around \$52,000 or less to qualify for reduced-price meals. With the cost of living on the rise, there are too many Maryland families who struggle financially to meet their most basic needs and yet do not qualify because their income exceeds this incredibly low eligibility threshold. There have been reports of children skipping meals because they have a lunch debt. Teachers often attempt to fill in the gap by providing snacks to hungry children.

By providing school meals at no cost to all students, Maryland would be supporting equity in the classroom and making sure every child has the nutrition they need in order to excel. These meals are important to students' academic success just as textbooks or transportation are and should be treated as a critical component to education. When students are distracted by hunger because they are unable to afford school breakfast or lunch, they miss out on the chance to learn and benefit from the important opportunities offered by Maryland's education system.

Hungry kids can't learn. Ensuring that every child in the state has access to a nutritious school breakfast and lunch every day is a smart and effective investment in Maryland's communities and future. **Therefore, the Free State PTA urges the passage of SB 557.** The **Maryland Education Coalition** joins this testimony.

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

*Marla Posey-Moss*

Marla Posey-Moss, President  
[mposey-moss@fspta.org](mailto:mposey-moss@fspta.org)

**sb557- breakfast, lunch, MD schools- B&T 2-22-'23.**

Uploaded by: Lee Hudson

Position: FAV



**Delaware-Maryland Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

Testimony Prepared for the  
**Budget and Taxation Committee**  
and the  
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
on  
**Senate Bill 557**  
February 22, 2023  
Position: **Favorable**

Misters Chairmen and members of the Committees, thank you for this opportunity to testify about nutrition, well-being, and the children of our State. I am Lee Hudson, assistant to the bishop for the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in public policy.

Our community's work in policy advocacy began as a commitment to end hunger. That remains one of the principal goals of our work, nationally and internationally, as policy advocates. It was advanced in 1999 with, "Economic Life," (ELCA, re: *the moral imperative to seek sufficient, sustainable livelihood for all*). We maintain a permanent institutional appeal to address and advocate an end to hunger.

Child hunger is something like a permanent public scandal in the United States. One of the social defects illuminated during the Covid19 pandemic was a spike in malnourishment among children because of the loss of nutritional resources delivered by the public education system.

According to *Save the Children*, twelve million American children are hungry: Kentucky, **Maryland**, Oklahoma, and Washington, D.C. report a 22% rate of family hunger: in **Maryland**, Hispanic and Black families are almost 4 times as likely to face hunger as white families. For all the good work Maryland has done to address poverty, in health care, work-fare, EITC, etc. these statistics are shouting that something is being left out.

It's Maryland's children. We must not leave out Maryland's children. There are social, public health, education, and economic consequences to child hunger. Leave those aside in your consideration of **Senate Bill 557**. It is cruelly calculating to measure malnourished children with a putative profit-loss formula. *Hungry children have no agency over their condition.*

Maryland children, and almost certainly capturing the hungry ones, are mandated by law to be public school children. Give them two acceptable meals a day. Just feed them. Diminish these appalling child hunger statistics, at least some, at least in Maryland. Pass **Senate Bill 557**.

Thank you for this important hearing.

Lee Hudson

**SB0557\_COG FARM Committee\_Fav.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lindsay Smith

Position: FAV



February 21, 2023

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 557 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

Dear Senator Guzzone:

On behalf of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) [Food and Regional Agriculture Member \(FARM\) Policy Committee](#), we are writing to offer our support for SB 557 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion. As the association of local governments in the metropolitan Washington region, COG supports measures that will strengthen programs that support childhood nutrition and well-being. This includes using federal, state, and local legislative efforts to make access to school meals free for all students in the region.

SB 557 requires that if a school participates in the federal School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch Program, then each student in the school must be offered a free meal beginning in fiscal year 2025. The bill also provides for the reimbursement rate at which the State shall pay county boards and participating nonpublic schools for these meals. Further, it anticipates that county boards and participating nonpublic schools will maximize the use of all federal funds available to provide school breakfast and lunch.

COG's FARM Policy Committee is supportive of SB 557 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion. The bill's passage would provide enormous benefits to Maryland students and families. Maryland would join a growing number of states that are stepping up to fill the gap left by Congress when it failed to make the free school meals provided during the pandemic permanent. The District of Columbia also has active legislation to provide universal free meals to students.

Please contact Lindsay Smith, COG's Regional Food Systems Planner at (202) 962-3309 or [lsmith@mwcog.org](mailto:lsmith@mwcog.org) if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Stehle'.

Jon Stehle  
Chair, FARM Policy Committee  
Councilmember  
City of Fairfax, Virginia

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Kennedy'.

Kate Kennedy  
Vice Chair, FARM Policy Committee  
Councilmember  
City of College Park, Maryland



C:  
Monica Beyrouti Nuñez, Government Relations Manager, COG

# **WA- SB 557 - Universal School Meals - FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lisa Klingenmaier

Position: FAV





# Welfare Advocates

Founded 1979

228 W. Lexington Street — Suite 220 • Baltimore, Maryland 21201-3432

Phone: 667-600-3356 • Email: [klingenmaier@cc-md.org](mailto:klingenmaier@cc-md.org)

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## Senate Bill 557

### Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Program – Universal Expansion

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee & Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

February 22, 2022

### Support

*Welfare Advocates is a statewide coalition of social service organizations, advocacy groups, faith communities, and community members, whose mission it is to educate about and advocate for an adequate safety net and public policies that support families moving towards economic stability.*

**Welfare Advocates strongly supports SB 557**, which expands access to school meals by providing state funds to cover the cost of school breakfast and school lunch for all students in schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program.

**The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed our programs, our economy and our communities.** Before the pandemic, one in ten Marylanders lived at or below the Federal Poverty Line. When the pandemic began, safety-net program caseloads skyrocketed as more individuals and families in Maryland tumbled into economic insecurity. COVID-19 has laid to bare longstanding inequities in our systems and put a spotlight on the entrenched gaps and barriers that have long existed in our programs and policies to address and end poverty, especially for Black and Brown communities that have disproportionately borne the brunt of the pandemic due to systemic racism and historic disinvestment. It takes the longest for those with the lowest incomes to recover from economic crises, but alarmingly many of the extra supports that have kept families afloat – like universal free school meals - have ended.

**The National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs are a critical part of the social safety-net, but many struggling families are unable to qualify for the program now that tiered income requirements are back in place.** Especially with rising costs of inflation, there are many Maryland families who struggle financially to meet their most basic needs and yet do not qualify for free school meals because their income exceeds the incredibly low income eligibility threshold. Children get upwards of half of their daily calories from school meals, and as countless families are falling through the cracks of income eligibility, now is a critical time for the state to invest in a universal school meals program.<sup>1</sup> When students are distracted by hunger because their families are unable to afford school breakfast or lunch, they miss out on the chance to learn and benefit from the important opportunities offered by Maryland's education system.

**Providing free meals to all students is an essential investment in the health, wellbeing, and academic success of Maryland's children.** Offering school meals at no cost to all students supports equity in the classroom by making sure every child has the nutrition they need in order to excel. School meals are an essential component to education, and are linked to reduced food insecurity, improved academic achievement, improved school attendance, and improved overall health.<sup>2</sup> SB 557 is a smart investment for the future of our students, and also the future of our State.

**WA appreciates your consideration, and respectfully urges a favorable report on SB 557.**

*Submitted by Lisa Klingensmaier, Chair of Welfare Advocates*

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<sup>1</sup> CDC. 2022. School Nutrition. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/nutrition/schoolnutrition.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Kleinman, R. E., Hall, S., Green, H., Korzec-Ramirez, D., Patton, K., Pagano, M. E., & Murphy, J. M. (2002). Diet, breakfast, and academic performance in children. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12428078/>.

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**SB 557 Support.pdf**  
Uploaded by: Maddie Long  
Position: FAV



**Testimony in support of  
Senate Bill 557: Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch  
Programs – Universal Expansion**

**Budget and Taxation Committee  
Position: Favorable**

February 22, 2023

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. We advocate for legislative and regulatory policy changes to further educational equity and build the technical capacity of everyday Marylanders to hold state and local officials accountable to their responsibilities. **Strong Schools Maryland stands in support of Senate Bill 557.**

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a World-Class system of public schools for our state's students. We are making record-breaking investments in education and resources to support students for educational excellence. Through community school expansions and concentration of poverty grants, the Blueprint provides support and services that address the needs of children in communities with high poverty rates, high crime rates, and those that lack access to adequate health care and social services, with resources provided at the school level and in the community. SB 557 reflects these ideals by expanding breakfast and lunch programs in the state.

Senate Bill 557 would:

- Provide free meals to students by requiring that if a school participates in the federal School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch

Program, then each student in the school must be offered a meal at no cost;

- Support county boards and participating nonpublic schools by calculating a reimbursement for the the State to provide; and
- Expands access for students who attend schools that do not participate in federal nutrition programs by requiring the state to pay the difference in costs.

Students who experience hunger have been proven to have low performance in school, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.<sup>1</sup> Hungry students are more likely to score lower on standardized tests, repeat a grade, be suspended from school, get sick more often, and be hospitalized more frequently.<sup>2</sup> Maryland has now begun automatically adding students under Medicaid coverage to the free or reduced-price school lunches program. This new criteria of eligibility has identified a large blindspot in our counting of students in poverty. **We have been missing 1 in 9 students.**<sup>3</sup>

Now more than ever, we must affirm our commitment to Maryland students. Senate Bill 557 expands breakfast and lunch programs so that more students in need receive nutritious meals and local boards have the state support they need to thrive.

**For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 557.**

For more information, contact:

Maddie Long

maddie@strongschoolsmaryland.org

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<sup>1</sup> [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

<sup>2</sup> [No Kid Hungry](#)

<sup>3</sup> [DLS 2023 Fiscal Briefing](#)

**SB 557 - MoCo\_Elrich\_FAV (GA 23).pdf**

Uploaded by: Marc Elrich

Position: FAV



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich  
County Executive

February 22, 2023

TO: The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich  
County Executive

RE: Senate Bill 557, *Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion*  
Support

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I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 557, *Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion*, which requires that the State provide funding to supplement federal aid to cover the cost of providing free meals to all students in schools that participate in the National School Breakfast and School Lunch Programs. Those programs provide federal funding to reimburse school systems for the cost of serving free or reduced-price meals to eligible low-income students. Under the bill, all students would receive free meals in any school that receives federal reimbursement for free or reduced-price meals.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought increased attention to the unacceptably high number of Maryland families that struggle with food insecurity; a number which has remained alarmingly elevated over the past three years. As hundreds of thousands of Maryland children and families continue down the long road to recovery from the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, there has never been a more important time to make significant investments in the school meal programs.

Extensive research has shown that access to healthy meals improves students' educational experiences, academic achievement, and social and emotional wellbeing. By providing school meals at no cost to all students, Maryland would be supporting equity in the classroom and making sure every child has the nutrition they need in order to excel. These meals are just as important to students' academic success as textbooks or transportation and should be treated as a critical component of education. When students are distracted by hunger because they were unable to participate in school breakfast or lunch, they miss out on the chance to learn and benefit from the important opportunities offered by Maryland's education system.

The Honorable Guy Guzzone

Re: Senate Bill 557

February 22, 2023

Hungry kids can't learn. Requiring the State to provide supplemental funding to ensure that every child has access to a nutritious school breakfast and lunch every day is a smart and effective investment in Maryland's communities and future.

I respectfully request that the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee give this bill a favorable report.

cc: Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee

**SB 557.pdf**

Uploaded by: Mary Klatko

Position: FAV



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 557

### Primary and Secondary Education - Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

*Senate Budget & Taxation Committee*

February 22, 2023

Good Afternoon. My name is Mary Klatko, and I am the Legislative Chairperson for the Maryland School Nutrition Association. I am here today to express our strong support for SB 557.

This legislation's purpose is to provide healthy, nutritious school breakfast and lunch to all students in every grade in all schools in Maryland because no child can learn without good nutrition. When feeling hungry they lose concentration, and sadly many cannot afford to buy meals at school or even bring a sandwich from home.

Schools are trying to show students that they are equal, that they all receive the same support for their education, such as transportation, teachers, books, temperature-controlled classrooms, and ipads but most noticeably missing for too many is the benefit of nutritious meals. That's where our students are treated differently based on their family's socioeconomic situation, and that is not right or acceptable. We place students into the categories of paid, free or reduced price instead of based on accomplishments.

Maryland has been a national leader in combating childhood hunger for decades such as:

- In 1998 launching the free statewide school breakfast program known as Maryland Meals for Achievement
- In 2018 the Maryland Cares for Kids Act eliminated reduced price meal payments by students.

This state has demonstrated a commitment to student health time and again.

The federal government provided school meals free every day all during the pandemic to all students through our school system programs and then abruptly closed them this school year.

Many parents do not complete the application for free or reduced-price meals mostly due to embarrassment. Food and Nutrition Service Programs are accumulating debt at an astronomical rate. Five months into this school year, the statewide amount of debt for meals in Maryland is 1.7 million dollars. Where is that money to come from? The School Food and Nutrition Service Programs, with a few exceptions, are enterprise funds which means they are not part of the General Fund Operating Budget. They stand alone.

This bill is the answer to:

- the nutritional needs of our students, as well as
- support for the educational process, and
- financial balance for the Food & Nutrition Service Programs.

Current Research Reviews have found that Universal Free School Meals are associated with

- increased participation
- improved diet quality

- either no change or improved BMI (Body Mass Index)

Maryland is not alone in facing this need. The National Conference of State Legislatures reported last summer that 17 states have considered or passed legislation for Universal Free School Meals. In 2023, Montana and Washington, DC have begun to pursue this legislation along with Maryland.

We are very hopeful that you will see the value in supporting all Maryland students with a nutritious breakfast and lunch in school every day to give them:

- the opportunity to learn and succeed not only in school but in life as well and
- to grow healthy and strong through good nutrition

I have attached the following:

- USDA Meal Pattern Nutritional Requirements for School Breakfast and Lunch
- colorful page of what school meals look like
- 2022 State Legislative Summary

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. The Maryland School Nutrition Association urges your favorable support for SB 557.

**School Breakfast Program Meal Pattern**

	<b>Grades K-5</b>	<b>Grades 6-8</b>	<b>Grades 9-12</b>
Food Components	Amount of Food <sup>a</sup> per Week		
	(minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) <sup>b c</sup>	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) <sup>b c</sup>	0	0	0
Dark green	0	0	0
Red/Orange	0	0	0
Beans and peas (legumes)	0	0	0
Starchy	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Grains (oz eq) <sup>d</sup>	7-10 (1)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq) <sup>e</sup>	0	0	0
Fluid milk <sup>f</sup> (cups)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
<b>Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week</b>			
Min-max calories (kcal) <sup>g h</sup>	350-500	400-550	450-600
Saturated fat (% of total calories) <sup>h</sup>	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Target 1 (mg)	≤ 540	≤ 600	≤ 640
<i>Trans</i> fat <sup>h</sup>	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving.		

<sup>a</sup> Food items included in each group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup.

<sup>b</sup> One-quarter cup of dried fruit counts as  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of vegetables. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.

<sup>c</sup> Schools must offer 1 cup of fruit daily and 5 cups of fruit weekly. Vegetables may be substituted for fruits, but the first two cups per week of any such substitution must be from the dark green, red/orange, beans/peas (legumes), or “Other vegetables” subgroups, as defined in §210.10(c)(2)(iii) of this chapter.

<sup>d</sup> At least 80 percent of grains offered weekly must meet the whole grain-rich criteria specified in FNS guidance, and the remaining grain items offered must be enriched. Schools may substitute 1 oz. eq. of meat/meat alternate for 1 oz. eq. of grains after the minimum daily grains requirement is met.

<sup>e</sup> There is no meat/meat alternate requirement.

<sup>f</sup> All fluid milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less). Milk may be unflavored or flavored, provided that unflavored milk is offered at each meal service.

<sup>g</sup> The average daily calories for a 5-day school week must be within the range (at least the minimum and no more than the maximum values).

<sup>h</sup> Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and sodium. Foods of minimal nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent milk fat are not allowed.

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**National School Lunch Program Meal Pattern**

	<b>Grades K-5</b>	<b>Grades 6-8</b>	<b>Grades 9-12</b>
Food Components	Amount of Food <sup>a</sup> per Week		
	(minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) <sup>b</sup>	2½ ( ½ )	2½ ( ½ )	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) <sup>b</sup>	3¾ ( ¾ )	3¾ ( ¾ )	5 (1)
Dark green <sup>c</sup>	½	½	½
Red/Orange <sup>c</sup>	¾	¾	1¼
Beans and peas (legumes) <sup>c</sup>	½	½	½
Starchy <sup>c</sup>	½	½	½
Other <sup>c d</sup>	½	½	¾
Additional Vegetables to Reach Total <sup>e</sup>	1	1	1½
Grains (oz eq) <sup>f</sup>	8-9 (1)	8-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Fluid milk (cups) <sup>g</sup>	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
<b>Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week</b>			
Min-max calories (kcal) <sup>h</sup>	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated fat (% of total calories) <sup>h</sup>	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Interim Target 1 (mg) <sup>h</sup>	≤ 1,230	≤ 1,360	≤ 1,420
Sodium Interim Target 1A (mg) <sup>h i</sup>	≤ 1,110	≤ 1,225	≤ 1,280
<i>Trans</i> fat <sup>h</sup>	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving.		

<sup>a</sup> Food items included in each group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is ⅛ cup.

<sup>b</sup> One-quarter cup of dried fruit counts as ½ cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as ½ cup of vegetables. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.

<sup>c</sup> Larger amounts of these vegetables may be served.

<sup>d</sup> This category consists of “Other vegetables” as defined in paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(E) of this section. For the purposes of the NSLP, the “Other vegetables” requirement may be met with any

additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas (legumes) vegetable subgroups as defined in paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section.

<sup>e</sup> Any vegetable subgroup may be offered to meet the total weekly vegetable requirement.

<sup>f</sup> At least 80 percent of grains offered weekly must meet the whole grain-rich criteria specified in FNS guidance, and the remaining grain items offered must be enriched.

<sup>g</sup> All fluid milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less). Milk may be flavored or unflavored, provided that unflavored milk is offered at each meal service.

<sup>h</sup> Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and sodium. Foods of minimal nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent are not allowed.

<sup>i</sup> Sodium Interim Target 1A must be met no later than July 1, 2023 (SY 2023-2024).

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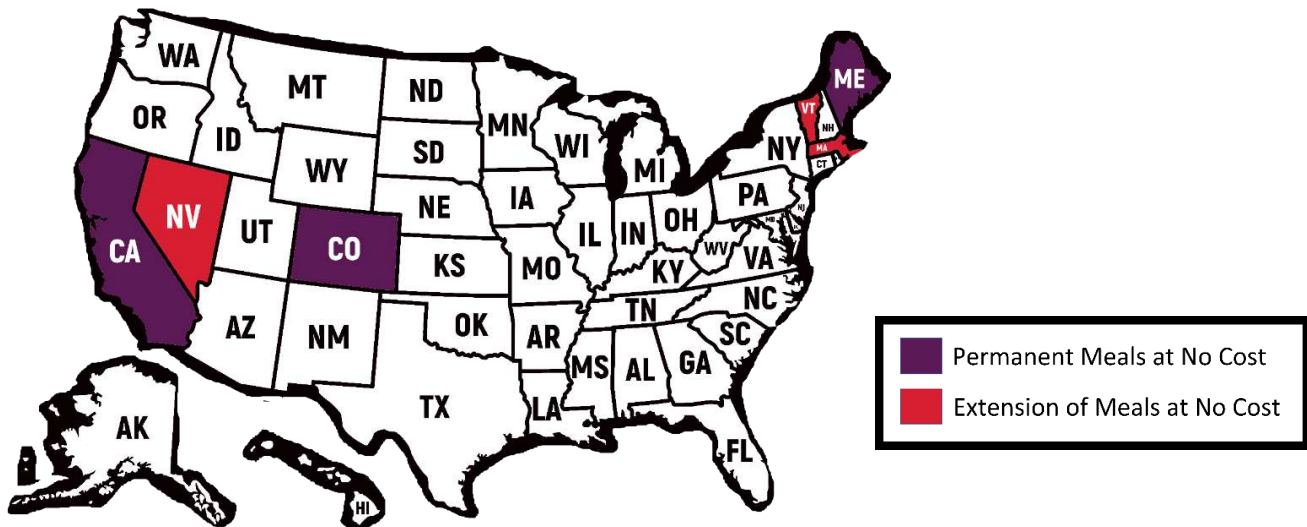


# 2022 STATE LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY: YEAR END REVIEW

*This report is a summary of key school nutrition state legislation that changed status or was introduced between January 1 and December 31, 2022. Unpaid meal debt remains an issue in some states.*

- 17 of the bills in this report have been signed into law.
- 3 states now offer school meals at no cost to students on a permanent basis.
  - California [AB 130](#)
  - Colorado [HB 1414](#)
  - Maine [LD 1679](#)
- 3 states have expanded access to school meals at no cost to students for SY 2022-2023.
  - Massachusetts [FY2023 Budget](#)
  - Nevada [The Nevada Legislature Interim Finance Committee](#) approved up to [\\$75 million of American Rescue Plan Act funds](#)
  - Vermont [S. 100](#)
- 8 state legislatures (PA, NJ, NY, NC, MN, TN, MO and SC) have legislation pending that would create free school meal programs. Please note the midterm elections might have an impact on legislative activity.

## States With Permanent Meals and Extension of Meals at No Cost



*SNA state advocacy resources are a collaborative effort intended to support grassroots efforts at the local level. We welcome your updates at [advocacy@schoolnutrition.org](mailto:advocacy@schoolnutrition.org).*

**SB557 - MD School of Nutrition Ass.**

Uploaded by: Megan Doran

Position: FAV



**SB 557.pdf**

Uploaded by: Megan Doran

Position: FAV

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0557

### Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

*Senate Budget & Taxation Committee*

February 22, 2023

Good Afternoon, my name is Megan Doran and I am the Director of Food Services for St. Mary's County Public School. I am also the current President of The Maryland School Nutrition Association (MdSNA). MdSNA has a total of 21 active chapters that represent hundreds of individuals who have made it their life's work to feed students healthy and nutritious meals to support learning. I am here today to express my strong support and that of the Maryland School Nutrition Association for SB0557 for Universal Free Meals for all students in Maryland.

Recent studies document that access to nutritious meals in school increases the health and educational outcomes for our students. Investing in these programs to ensure all children, regardless of income, can access healthy meals would ensure that every child is ready to learn and thrive. This Bill would allow Maryland School Districts to focus on providing the healthiest and most appealing meals possible instead of spending resources processing applications and completing other administrative work. This bill would eliminate unpaid school meals fees and the stigmatizing practices that have been linked to school meals debt. Currently, only students from homes with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty line are eligible for free school meals. Many struggling families do not qualify for free school meals. Offering free meals to all students eliminates the cost barrier for children whose families' income is near the cutoff to receive free school meals. By having every student participate in school meals, this bill would eliminate the stigma some children fear of being labeled "poor" by their classmates.

I could sit here and dump more statistics and information that most of us are already aware of or I can ask you to think about being a high school student. This particular previously "free" high school student who typically hasn't eaten breakfast or lunch at school for fear of being labeled "poor" by their peers was able to eat breakfast and lunch during the pandemic without the feeling of being labeled. Now imagine being a middle school student that didn't qualify in the past and still doesn't even though their parents lost their job but for the last two years they have been able to eat free breakfast and lunch to help eliminate some of the food bill burden for their parents who are trying to figure it out. Or perhaps the elementary student that gets prepackaged items from the line so that they can take food home for their siblings who are not school aged. Fast forward to today, the "free student" is now a "poor kid again" in the mind of that student. The student whose parents still haven't found a job that generates the same income as before is struggling with hunger pains because they dare not go into the lunch line because they know there is no money on their account and no food at home. The student who took food home for their siblings now has nothing to give. These are real scenarios that I have seen first hand.

In St. Mary's County the Free and Reduced Meal Percentage has increased from 32% pre-pandemic to 40% as of October 31 this school year. That is roughly 1400 more students qualified for free meals this school year. However, our average daily participation is down 10% from last year. The need is still there but the stigma has returned. How many students are going hungry? How many students are struggling to focus in class? How long is Maryland going to turn the other cheek and pretend that this isn't happening to one of our most vulnerable populations? My hope is not much longer. I ask that you support SB0557, to support all Maryland students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB0557 on behalf of the Maryland School Nutrition Association. We urge your favorable support.



# **FSRC Testimony HB 428\_ Universal School Meals\_Feb 2**

Uploaded by: Michael J Wilson

Position: FAV

February 21, 2023

2023 Session Support Testimony

SB557- Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs, Universal Expansion

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation  
POSITION: Testimony of Support for SB557  
BILL ANALYSIS: Providing Universal School Meals to All Maryland Students  
SIGNED: Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FRSC)

Honorable Chair Guzzone Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

My name is Michael J. Wilson. I am the Chair of the Communications and Coordination Committee of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FSRC). These comments are submitted on behalf of the Council, and do not necessarily represent the views the State of Maryland. The FSRC was established by the Maryland General Assembly in the 2021 legislative session to bring together 33 appointed council members from across the state, all with different points of entry and expertise, to work toward a common goal of a more resilient food system and to address the food insecurity crisis due to COVID-19.

The FSRC strongly supports House Bill 628 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion, which would require that all schools across the state of Maryland participating in the federal meal programs provide free breakfast and lunch to all students. Members of the FSRC recognize that during the school year, programs like the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program serve as the first line of defense against food insecurity, helping to shield children from going through the day hungry in the classroom and unable to concentrate.

A large body of evidence demonstrates that school meals reduce childhood hunger, decrease childhood overweight and obesity, improve child nutrition and wellness, enhance child development and school readiness, and support learning, attendance, and behavior.<sup>1</sup> Providing universal school meals (through the federal community eligibility provision, or CEP) has helped

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<sup>1</sup> Food Research and Action Center. School Meals are Essential for Student Health and Learning. May 2021. <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/School-Meals-are-Essential-Health-and-Learning.pdf>

to reduce food insecurity<sup>2</sup> and improve student nutrition, behavior, and academic performance<sup>3</sup> at participating schools. Investing in these programs so that all children in the state of Maryland, regardless of income, can access healthy meals year-round would help ensure that every child is ready to learn and thrive.

During the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years, COVID-19 pandemic-related waivers issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture allowed school meals to be served at no cost in Maryland and across the nation, no matter a family's income level. These waivers helped mitigate the alarming spikes in food insecurity caused by COVID-19 and provided a much-needed lifeline to struggling families and children.

However, despite the benefits of providing meals to all students at no cost, these pandemic-era provisions expired at the end of the 21-22 school year, meaning a return to the traditional tiered payment system starting this school year. The tiered payment system results in many students who need a nutritious breakfast and lunch at school failing to qualify for free or reduced-price meals. For example, a family of four living on just \$50,000 per year is ineligible for this program. Additionally, there are stigma issues inherent in a tiered payment system, and students bear the brunt of the unpaid school meal debt facing families and schools.

HB 628 aims to permanently remove these barriers in all Maryland schools participating in the federal meal programs. Adding state funding dedicated to providing all children, regardless of income, with access to healthy meals will help ensure that every child is ready to learn and thrive.

As such, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 628. Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>2</sup> Gross S, et al. Household Food Security Status of Families with Children Attending Schools that Participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and Those with Children Attending Schools that are CEP-Eligible, but Not Participating. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*. 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19320248.2019.1679318>

<sup>3</sup> Hecht A, et al. Impact of The Community Eligibility Provision of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act on Student Nutrition, Behavior, and Academic Outcomes: 2011–2019. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2020. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305743>

**SB0557\_FAV\_Montgomery County Food Council .pdf**

Uploaded by: Michelle Caruso

Position: FAV





February 22, 2023

**2023 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY  
SB0557: Universal School Meals**

**BILL:** SB0557: Primary and Secondary Education - Breakfast and Lunch Programs - Universal Expansion  
**COMMITTEE:** Budget and Taxation  
**POSITION:** Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0557  
**BILL ANALYSIS:** Altering the standards of the State Free Feeding Program, beginning in FY25, to require that if a school participates in the federal School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch Program, then each student in the school must be offered a meal at no cost to the student; providing for the reimbursement rate at which the State shall pay county boards and participating nonpublic schools for the meals offered to students.

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee:

The Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC) urges you to **SUPPORT** this bill to expand the Federal School Breakfast and Lunch program to provide free meals to Maryland students beginning in fiscal year 2025.

This legislation is an essential investment for the health and academic success of Maryland students. Access to nutritious food at school allows students to be better focused while in class and sets them up for success throughout the school day. By providing meals to all students that are aligned with USDA guidelines, this bill removes stigma from participating in the school meal program and ensures that students are getting whole meals that are nutritious. School systems provide desks, textbooks, and transportation for students; school meals should be considered another essential part of the educational experience in our state. Other states such as Colorado, Massachusetts, Maine, and California have also recently begun providing universal school meals to reduce barriers like hunger to a successful education. For many students, school may be their most reliable source of food and having access to meals will be a huge relief to many families.

During the 2021-22 school year, over 95,000 Montgomery County students received their lunch through school and more than 50% of those were free and reduced-priced meals. Due to the high cost of living in Montgomery County, there are many students who face food insecurity but are



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ineligible for free and reduced-price meals due to their household income being above 185% of the federal poverty level. This gap can cause some students to have insufficient food during the day.

Where schools provide food to students without sufficient funds to cover the cost, the schools then face unrecoverable debt. Since 2018, Montgomery County has settled \$235,579 worth of student debt from school lunches<sup>1</sup>. This legislation would also lessen the burden on the school system to keep track of debts, and remove the potentially humiliating interactions for students who are unable to afford school meals.

We strongly support this bill to establish universal school meals at participating public and nonpublic schools and create a system to support students enrolled in schools that are not eligible. With students spending the majority of the day at school, it is vital to ensure that all students are able to access nutritious meals that do not create an additional financial burden on students' families or school systems. To best ensure the future success of all Montgomery County students, and students in the state of Maryland as a whole, it is vital to remove barriers to education and food access. **For these reasons, the Montgomery County Food Council supports SB0557 and urges a FAVORABLE REPORT for this bill.**

*The Montgomery County Food Council is a nonprofit organization that serves as the primary connection point for businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and residents around food system issues in our County. We bring together over 2,000 local and regional partners in community-wide education, advocacy, and capacity building initiatives. Our work cultivates a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable local food system by enhancing food access for the over 100,000 at risk for hunger, expanding food education opportunities for all residents, supporting our County's farms and food and beverage businesses, and addressing the impact of local food production, distribution, consumption and recycling on our natural resources*

**For more information, please contact Massa Cressall, Interim Executive Director, at the email and phone number below.**

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<sup>1</sup> DCist, 2022 "Montgomery County School Lunch Debt Policy"  
<https://dcist.com/story/22/05/10/md-montgomery-county-school-lunch-debt-policy/>



**SB0557\_Written Testimony\_Favorable\_MdPHA.docx.2.21**

Uploaded by: Oluwatosin Olateju

Position: FAV



***Mission:*** To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy ***Vision:*** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 557**  
**Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion**  
**Committees: Budget and Taxation; Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**By: Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)**  
**Hearing Date: February 22, 2023**

Chair Guzzone, Chair Feldman, and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee, and the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 557. This bill would require that schools participating in the federal School Breakfast Program, or the National School Lunch Program offer a meal to each student at no cost to the student, whereby a reimbursement rate shall be provided to allow the State to pay county boards and participating nonpublic schools for the free meals offered to the students.

The school environment plays a vital role in children’s diets and overall health, and policies for universal free school meals can contribute to positive child health outcomes. Fortunately, a large body of research assessing universal free school meals found positive associations with diet quality, food security, and academic performance for low-income and food-insecure households.<sup>1,2</sup> Access to healthy school meals is a critical cornerstone to improving chronic health conditions and reducing educational inequities among young people.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, free school meals augment overall household resources and provide children with a regular source of nutritious meals.

Food insecurity is a significant public health problem affecting children in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Food insecurity disrupts food intake or eating patterns due to a lack of money or resources, and has been associated with adverse health, social, and academic outcomes among children. In Maryland, 543,650 people are facing hunger - and of them 167,020 are children. Also, 1 in 8 children in Maryland face hunger.<sup>5</sup> Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated food insecurity in Maryland making it difficult for charitable programs to fully

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine Ralston, Katie Treen, Alisha Coleman-Jensen, and Joanne Guthrie. Children's Food Security and USDA Child Nutrition Programs. United States Department of Agriculture. Summary. [https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84003/eib-174\\_summary.pdf](https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84003/eib-174_summary.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Cohen, J. F. W., Hecht, A. A., McLoughlin, G. M., Turner, L., & Schwartz, M. B. (2021). Universal school meals and associations with student participation, attendance, academic performance, diet quality, food security, and body mass index: A systematic review. *Nutrients*, 13(3), 911. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13030911>

<sup>3</sup> Seligman HK, Lararia BA, Kushel MB. Food insecurity is associated with chronic disease among low-income NHANES participants. *J Nutr*. 2010;140(2):304-10. Available from: <http://doi.org/10.3945/jn.109.112573>

<sup>4</sup> Thomas, M. M. C., Miller, D. P., & Morrissey, T. W. (2019). Food insecurity and child health. *Pediatrics*, 144(4), e20190397. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-0397>

<sup>5</sup> Maryland | Feeding America. (n.d.). Retrieved February 17, 2023, from <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/maryland>

support those facing hunger. Therefore, government assistance programs that promote free school meals must be established and sustained to help bridge the meal gap.

Thank you for your consideration and we urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 557.

*The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.*

**Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)**  
**PO Box 7045 · 6801 Oak Hall Ln · Columbia, MD 21045-9998**  
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**Parim Shah - SB557 Written Testimony .pdf**

Uploaded by: Parim Shah

Position: FAV

Before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
SB557 Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion  
SUPPORT

Dear Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

First and foremost, thank you for taking the time to read this testimony. I am in support of SB557 (Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion).

My name is Parim Shah, and I am a secondary student attending Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, a Maryland public school. The universal meals standard that would be set by SB557 is vital in the fight against not only food insecurity but also educational inequity and the achievement gap. Ensuring free, healthy, and accessible breakfast and lunch for every student will improve educational outcomes for low-income students, reduce food insecurity, and restore an extremely beneficial pandemic-era policy.

Universal meals will markedly improve educational outcomes, especially for low-income and food-insecure students. Healthy school meals with rich nutritional value are necessary for a student to succeed as most get **half of their daily calories** from school meals. Furthermore, disproportionately, low-income and underprivileged students are academically affected by a lack of universal meals, making this an **issue of educational equity**. I've personally talked to and seen several students at my school who are not able to eat lunch and/or breakfast and have a hard time completing assignments and taking tests largely because of a lack of nutrition. Under a universal meal standard, access to food will not be a barrier to academic success as it is now.

Moreover, passing SB557 is an essential step forward in combating food insecurity in Maryland. At the present moment, nearly **200 thousand children are food insecure**, an embarrassing statistic. Without action to combat the issue of food insecurity, the number of food-insecure children is only going to grow, and **schools play a crucial role in combating the issue**. The meals that they provide are in some cases the only nutritional food students get on a daily basis. As a state, making sure no child goes home hungry should be a top priority.

A universal meal standard has also proven to be deeply beneficial in schools across Maryland and the nation, both anecdotally and statistically. The no-income limit and no-cost federal government universal meals funding kept millions of children from going hungry during the pandemic. Families across the country had an **80% reduction in food insecurity risk** because of the federal universal meals funding. Many classmates and I have greatly benefited from that funding. I saw **students who would've otherwise not eaten during the day, eat when there were universally free meals**. This happens because of the reduced stigma of a no-income limit and no-cost universal meals standard. The fiscal cost of restoring such a universal meals program is well-served and will also be at least partially offset by the reduced administrative costs that school districts must undertake in the current system.

No child should ever go home hungry or suffer academically because of a lack of nutrition, and passing SB557 is a massive step forward in making that a reality. I encourage members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to support this bill.

Respectfully submitted,  
Parim Shah

**SB557\_MSEA\_Zwerling\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Samantha Zwerling

Position: FAV



**Testimony SUPPORT of Senate Bill 557  
Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs –  
Universal Expansion**

**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
February 22, 2023**

**Samantha Zwerling  
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 557, which would make meals available to all students in a school that participates in the federal School Breakfast Program or National School Lunch Program. Achieving, as outlined in this bill, universal meal programs is one of MSEA's legislative priorities in the 2023 Legislative Session.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

*“Hungry children cannot be expected to fully engage in their learning if they are distracted by their empty bellies. By ensuring that all students have access to healthy school meals, we are making a significant investment in our state’s most precious resource. Providing every child in our state with the nutritious meal their growing bodies need to thrive not only helps them be better prepared to learn, it’s also the right and humane thing to do.”*

*- Cheryl Bost, President, Maryland State Education Association*

Educators know all too well that, for far too many of our students, the only source of a nutritious meal they might have access to in a day is at their school. Few things are more gut wrenching to educators than seeing their students suffer, particularly for the want of the sufficient amount of food their growing bodies need to survive and thrive. Hungry children experience real and lasting health impacts that can put their physical, mental, and cognitive development at risk as well as their social-emotional functioning. These impacts lead to deleterious effects such as poorer academic and behavioral outcomes for the children in our schools. Hungry children cannot be expected to fully



engage in their learning if their attention is rapt by the rumbling and discomfort in their empty bellies.

This bill pairs nicely with the work the General Assembly has done through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and builds on the last decade of meal expansion bills for students. The General Assembly and education advocates have worked in tandem to bring greater focus to community schools and to provide targeted resources to students living in concentrated poverty. As recently identified, over 50% of Maryland students now live in poverty and unfortunately that number has grown in the last decade. As we work to stand-up community schools around the state with important wrap around services, universal meals is another piece of that puzzle. Universal meals as outlined here reduce administrative burden, reduce meal shaming amongst students, and ensure that students are ready to learn with full bellies.

The State must do whatever practicable to make feeding children easier and this bill is a meaningful effort toward that goal.

**MSEA urges a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 557.**

# **MAP - Support for SB 557 - Breakfast and Lunch Pro**

Uploaded by: Stacey Jefferson

Position: FAV



## Member Agencies:

211 Maryland

Baltimore Jewish Council

Behavioral Health System Baltimore

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Energy Advocates

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Family League of Baltimore

Fuel Fund of Maryland

Job Opportunities Task Force

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,  
Inc.

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Loyola University Maryland

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Community Action  
Partnership

Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Paul's Place

St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore

Welfare Advocates

## Marylanders Against Poverty

Kali Schumitz, Co-Chair

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Mark Huffman, Co-Chair

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## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 557

### Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

*Senate Budget & Taxation Committee*

*Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee*

**February 22, 2023**

*Submitted by Kali Schumitz and Mark Huffman, Co-Chairs*

**Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports SB 557**, which aims to provide state funding to offer school breakfast and school lunch at no cost to all Maryland students attending schools that participate in the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs.

Studies have long shown that school meals reduce childhood hunger, decrease childhood overweight and obesity, improve child nutrition and wellness, enhance child development and school readiness, and support learning, attendance, and behavior.<sup>1</sup> More recent studies reaffirm that access to nutritious meals in school increases the long-term health and educational outcomes for children by helping to establish healthy eating habits from an early age.<sup>2</sup>

**Despite these proven benefits, the current tiered payment system allows too many children to fall through the cracks.** While school meals remain one of the federal government's most powerful tools for delivering good nutrition to children, the low eligibility threshold excludes many families who struggle to meet their most basic needs from receiving any assistance.

**For example, a family of four living on just \$52,000 per year is ineligible for the free or reduced-price school meal program.** With inflation levels and grocery prices at a historic high on top of Maryland's already high cost of living, many Maryland families living above this threshold still struggle financially and are unable to make school meal payments, leading to burdensome school meal debt. Additionally, obstacles such as language barriers, misinformation about the program, and stigma also keep many eligible families from even submitting school meal applications.

SB 557 aims to address these barriers to participation by ensuring that all Maryland students have access to the healthy school breakfast and lunch they need to grow and thrive in the classroom and beyond – advancing equity, ending stigma, and investing in Maryland's future.

**MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 557.**

**Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.**

<sup>1</sup> Food Research & Action Center (2016). Research Brief: Breakfast for Learning. Available at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/breakfastforlearning-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Food Research & Action Center (2021). School Meals are Essential Health and Learning. Available at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/School-Meals-are-Essential-Health-and-Learning.pdf>

**SB557CIF\_fav.pdf**

Uploaded by: Steven Mandel

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY OF THE CRITICAL ISSUES FORUM (CIF) OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
BEFORE THE SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION COMMITTEE  
IN SUPPORT OF SB 557: BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAMS - UNIVERSAL EXPANSION  
FEBRUARY 22, 2023**

**FAVORABLE**

CIF is a coalition of three synagogues in Montgomery County, Kol Shalom, Adat Shalom, and Temple Beth Ami, that include over 1750 households and three denominations of Judaism: Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist. CIF serves as a vehicle for our congregations to speak out on policy issues, such as food insecurity, that relate to our shared values, including the Jewish traditions that emphasize the sanctity and primacy of human life. CIF provides this testimony in support of SB 557, which would provide State funding for free breakfasts and lunches in many Maryland schools beginning in FY 2025.

CIF recognizes that even before the COVID pandemic, there were a large number of families, particularly families of color, that struggled with food insecurity. The pandemic only increased the number of families struggling with covering basic human needs, such as food. According to the FRAC dashboard of August 2022 (based on the USDA Household Pulse Survey), 14.9% of Black households, 16.3% of Latinx households, and 13.8% of households with a high school education or less in Maryland were food insufficient. Recent inflation and rising food costs have been particularly challenging for families with limited incomes. Research shows that hungry children do not learn as well as children who are well nourished, and hunger also affects their physical and emotional well-being. Food Research and Action Center (2021), "School Meals are Essential for Student Health and Learning," available at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/School-Meals-are-Essential-Health-and-Learning.pdf>.

SB 557 would ensure that all schools participating in the Federal School Breakfast Program or National School Lunch Program would continue providing free breakfast and lunch to all their students, as they did during the Public Health Emergency. The bill thus builds off the important investments made in the 2019 Blueprint for Maryland's Future by supporting equity in the classroom and ensuring that every child has the nutrition he or she needs in order to excel. Offering universal free meals not only assures that each child has a minimum level of nourishment, but also removes the stigma associated with means-tested school meals programs, opens the program to families not currently eligible due to the low-income cutoff, ends unpaid school meal debt, and eliminates administrative burdens for schools.

**CIF requests a favorable report on SB 557.**



# **Susan Gross written testimony SB 557 Budget and Ta**

Uploaded by: Susan Gross

Position: FAV



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 557

Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

*Senate Budget and Taxation Committee*

February 22, 2023

### **Susan M. Gross, PhD, MPH, RDN, LDN**

My name is Dr. Susan Gross. I am a nutritionist and an associate scientist at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and I strongly support Senate Bill 557-Primary and Secondary Education-Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion, which aims to provide equitable access to Healthy School Meals For All and will ensure no student goes hungry during the school day. Additionally, this bill will support school systems, students, and their families as they recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by covering the cost of breakfast and lunch for all Maryland students. Hunger in children is associated with inability to concentrate and aggressive behavior<sup>1</sup>; and by feeding our students learning can occur without distraction. The provision of healthy meals for all students will also reduce the stigma associated with not having money to pay for meals as no one will be singled out.

During 2020 and 2021, the American Rescue Plan provided flexibility for all schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students. Maryland rose to this challenge, seamlessly provided these meals to all its students, and strengthened our safety net for all families. Unfortunately, this flexibility expired in the Fall of 2022, and once again, students and families in Maryland faced uncertainty about breakfast and lunch on school days.

One strategy to bolster our child nutrition safety net in the past was to expand access to the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). CEP allows high-poverty schools participating in US Department of Agriculture meal programs to offer universal free breakfast and lunch. Authorized as part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, CEP became available to eligible schools nationwide in 2014. This bill HB 628- Healthy School Meals for All build on the success of CEP by providing universal free breakfast and lunch in all schools across Maryland.

Since 2015, I have been evaluating the impact of CEP on Maryland schools. My research has included speaking with school administrators, parents, and students in Maryland about issues related to food insecurity. One of the consistent findings of our research was that families of students who could not pay for the school meals and did not qualify for free meals often had trouble coming up with the money for school provided meals on a regular basis.

Maryland students in non-CEP districts complained of experiencing shaming in the cafeteria when they could not afford to pay for meals at school. Additionally, children and adolescents fear the stigma of being identified by their peers as poor or needy, which often leads to skipping meals. Skipping meals has been associated with poor academic performance and increased risk of behavioral issues.<sup>2</sup>

After the adoption of CEP by Baltimore City Public Schools, students in participating schools were nearly three times less likely to be food insecure compared to students attending a CEP eligible, but nonparticipating school, even after adjusting for race/ethnicity and education level of the parent/caregiver.<sup>3</sup> Other research has shown that schools that provide universal free meals experience positive impacts on student nutrition, behavior, and academic performance.<sup>4</sup>

With Healthy School Meals For All, students will have the security of knowing that at least two meals per day are available to them each school day, and it will provide the security and stability they need to learn and grow.

Maryland has the opportunity to reduce food insecurity, meal debt shaming and stigmatization of Maryland students and expand the availability of healthy school meals through SB 557.

As such, I urge a favorable report on SB 557 in order to support students, families, schools, and entire communities as we move beyond the pandemic.

*The opinions expressed herein are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Johns Hopkins University.*

Thank you for the opportunity to express my thoughts.

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<sup>1</sup> Kleinman RE, et al. Pediatrics. 1998. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.101.1.e3>

<sup>2</sup> Müller K, et al. Eur J Clin Nutr. 2013 Feb;67(2):185-9.

<sup>3</sup> Gross S, et al. J Hunger Envir Nutr Oct 2019 <https://doi.org/10.1080/19.320248.2019.1679318>

<sup>4</sup> Hecht A, et al. American journal of public health 2020. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305743>

**HB628\_SB557.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Willie Flowers

Position: FAV



# NAACP

## Maryland

### STATE CONFERENCE

## Testimony of Willie Flowers; President NAACP Maryland State Conference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 628/SB 557

Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion

*House Ways and Means Committee/Senate Budget & Taxation Committee*

February 22, 2023

**THE NAACP MARYLAND STATE CONFERENCE SUPPORTS HB-628/SB-557. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE BILL CREATES AN OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE ACCESS TO SCHOOL LUNCHES FOR ALL STUDENTS WHO ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

**AS YOU KNOW, THE GOAL OF PROVIDING BREAKFAST AND LUNCH TO STUDENTS IS IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS TO REMAIN HEALTHY AND TO AVOID HUNGER DURING THE SCHOOL DAY. EVEN DURING SEGREGATION THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL MOVEMENT PROVIDED FOR AND NOURISHMENT DURING THE SEGREGATION PERIOD THAT SENDS A MESSAGE THAT OFFERING BREAKFAST AND LUNCH HAS ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT.**

**THIS BILL RESTORES THE PRACTICE SO THAT ALL STUDENTS WILL HAVE BREAKFAST AND LUNCH DURING THE SCHOOL DAY.**

**THE STATE OF MARYLAND SHOULD PROVIDE SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND LUNCH FOR ALL STUDENTS. THE APPROACH ALLOWS STUDENTS WHO LIVE WITH THE STIGMA OF FREE AND REDUCED LUNCHES BECAUSE OF ALL STUDENTS ARE PROVIDED ACCESS THERE WILL BE NO SHAME WHEN IT COMES TO BEING SINGLED OUT FOR THE TERM FARMS OR FREE AND REDUCED. OVERALL THIS IS A GOOD STEP TO NEUTRALIZE THOSE UNSPOKEN OF CHALLENGES.**

**THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE BILL WAS THAT NOURISHMENT GIVES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN SCHOOL.**

**FINALLY, DURING THIS TIME OF CHALLENGE AND WHEN FAMILIES ARE IN NEED OF SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE TO REDUCE EXPENSES THIS IS AN EXCELLENT POLICY TO PROVIDE INDIRECT FINANCIAL CAPACITY TO FAMILIES.**

NAACP

Maryland State Conference

8775 Cloudleap Court, Columbia, MD 21045 Suite 200

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**WITH HB-628/SB-557 WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE A SERVICE FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES SO THAT EQUITY AND ACCESS TO FOOD CAN BE AN EXPECTATION FOR THE BETTERMENT OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

**IT IS ALSO SPECIAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE WORK OF THE EDDIE CONWAY. IN HIS WORK WITH THE BALTIMORE CITY BLACK PANTHER PARTY CHAPTER HE LED THE FREE BREAKFAST PROGRAM THAT INSPIRED THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO FUND FREE BREAKFAST AND LUNCH. THIS BILL EXTENDS HIS LEGACY OF SUPPORTING CHILDREN OF BALTIMORE CITY.**

# **Yeabsira%20Getachew%20-%20Free%20Lunch%20for%20All**

Uploaded by: Yeabsira Getachew

Position: FAV

My name is Yeabsira Getachew and I am representing the American Heart Association through MSEE, Maryland Students for Educational Equity. I am testifying in favor of Primary and Secondary Education Breakfast and Lunch program. I am an 11th grader, who attends Paint Branch High School in Burtonsville, MD. Growing up, I never preferred school lunch and was lucky enough to have a mother to pack my lunches for me. Unfortunately, many in my community did not have that luxury. I have early elementary memories of waiting for my friends to return from the lunch line. It was a rule to feed a prepackaged PB&J sandwich and a water bottle if they did not have money for hot lunch. I didn't realize the extent to which that simple lunch affected them until I forgot my own lunch one day. It was in 3rd grade. As a growing pre-teen, I sulked and finished my 2 ounce sandwich. The whole rest of the day, I sat in embarrassment as my stomach growled loudly during science and social studies. I was unable to focus, and went home and binged for the first time. Every time I left my lunch at home, and came home hungry, my binge eating habit developed. My story is one of many. Research confirms that hungry students are more likely to score lower on standardized tests, repeat a grade, be suspended from school, get sick more often and be hospitalized more frequently. That must not be taken lightly. The youth are our future, denying them of accessible lunch is the most avoidable slippery slope. I am advocating for the thousands of hungry kids nation-wide. First, we must start in the Maryland School System. Teenagers completing difficult classes, forced to study on an empty stomach. Young and naive elementary schoolers unable to speak up for themselves and ask for food. It can be solved and it must be. So I ask, every legislator in this room, please put the future first. Thank you.