



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 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 Beyrouiti Nuñez, Government Relations Manager, COG