



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.