



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 559

### Education – Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program – Annual Appropriation

*Senate Budget & Taxation Committee*  
February 22, 2023

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

#### **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

P: 410-412- 9105 ext 701

E: [kschumitz@mdeconomy.org](mailto:kschumitz@mdeconomy.org)

Mark Huffman, Co-Chair

P: (301) 776-0442 x1033

E: [MHuffman@laureladvocacy.org](mailto:MHuffman@laureladvocacy.org)

**Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports SB 559**, which provides additional state funding to ensure that all eligible schools are able to use the Maryland Meals for Achievement program to provide breakfast after the bell at no cost to all students in the school.

School meal programs are one of the nation's first line defenses against childhood hunger. In fact, extensive research shows that students who participate in the School Breakfast Program experience a multitude of positive outcomes, including:

- Decreased risk of food insecurity;
- Improved concentration, test scores, and academic performance;
- Healthier overall dietary intake;
- Fewer absences, tardiness, and visits to the school nurse.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these benefits, too many low-income students in our state miss out on starting their day with a nutritious breakfast due to barriers such as the stigma associated with the program, the cost of the meal, and the timing that breakfast is available.

Schools that implement Maryland Meals for Achievement are able to remove all three of these barriers at once by providing breakfast at no cost in an after the bell model, which gives more students access to the critical nutrition they need, mitigating inequities and reducing stigma in the process.

Serving breakfast after the bell is a proven strategy to increase access to breakfast and therefore helps students learn, grow, and achieve to their highest potential.

Unfortunately, Maryland Meals for Achievement is not currently fully funded, meaning there are eligible schools that are unable to participate due to insufficient state funding for the program. SB 559 will increase funding so that all eligible high-poverty schools in the state have the option to benefit from this successful program.

**MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 559.**

*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>