

**Testimony SUPPORT of Senate Bill 559  
Education – Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom**

**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 559, which increase the state appropriation for Maryland Meals for Achievement and give students more access to breakfast.

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.

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 559.**