



**Testimony in support of
Senate Bill 559: Education – Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom
Breakfast Program – Annual Appropriation**

**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 559.**

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. HB 514 reflects these ideals by increasing funding for the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) In-Classroom Breakfast Program.

Maryland currently leads the country in starting students’ days off right through the MMFA program. According to Maryland Hunger Solutions, in the

2022–2023 school year, 581 schools are participating in MMFA, which is up from 485 in the 2018–2019 school year.¹ Participating schools in the program have seen higher breakfast participation, improved student attendance, and improved student behavior.

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.² 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.**³ Appropriating more funds to the Maryland Meals for Achievement program will help expand access for Maryland students to receive the most important meal of the day.

Now more than ever, we must affirm our commitment to Maryland students and our educational investments through the Blueprint. Senate Bill 559 grants additional funds to our thriving MMFA program and sets students up for continuous success at the start of every day.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 559.

For more information, contact:

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¹ [Maryland Hunger Solutions](#)

² [No Kid Hungry](#)

³ [DLS 2023 Fiscal Briefing](#)