

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland Senate  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
For the Hearing on  
Public Schools – Anaphylactic Food Allergies – Guidelines (SB 0120)**

**January 24, 2023**

**SUPPORT**

Free State PTA represents over 50,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is composed of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. ***Senate Bill 0120, Public Schools – Anaphylactic Food Allergies – Guidelines, aligns with Free State PTA's principle for legislative action which states that schools must provide a safe environment where all students, teachers and staff can thrive.***

A founding principle of Free State PTA's (FSPTA) mission is to promote the safety and well-being of all children and youth. Senate Bill 0120 is consistent with this principle in that requires each county board of education to adopt, implement, and publish guidelines for reducing the risk to students with anaphylactic food allergies and develop a system to disclose the major food allergens contained in the foods served in the school. The legislation also adds a list of the top food allergens that will be required when disclosing ingredients in menus. In fact, as of January 1, 2023, the Food and Drug Administration includes sesame as the ninth major food allergen.

Today, one in 13 children has food allergies, or roughly two students in every classroom. Nearly 40 percent of these children have already experienced a severe or life-threatening allergic reaction. Severe allergic reactions should always be handled as a medical emergency. A Food Allergy Management and Prevention Plan is recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as best practice in their Voluntary Guidelines.

An excellent component of Senate Bill 0120 is the emphasis it has on communication and collaboration between school staff, students, and parents regarding notification about measures the school is taking to avoid exposure to allergens. This language comports with FSPTA's emphasis on the role of family engagement as it relates to child safety in that PTA emphasizes conducting regular and timely communication with families about safety policies and procedures. Comprehensive food allergy guidelines ensure a safe and effective educational environment for students with severe food allergies. Therefore, the Free State PTA urges the passage of SB0120.

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

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