



STATEMENT OF FARE (Food Allergy Research and Education) before  
the  
Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
January 24, 2023  
Position: **FAVORABLE SB 0120**

Chairman Feldman and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

On behalf of the approximately 27,500 Maryland public school students with life-threatening food allergies, [FARE](#) (Food Allergy Research and Education), the world's leading non-governmental organization engaged in food allergy advocacy and the largest private funder of food allergy research, strongly supports Senator Lam's legislation, SB 0120 – Public Schools – Anaphylactic Food Allergies – Guidelines and Requirements. We appreciate his leadership and are grateful for his efforts to protect our state's children by updating the voluntary guidance issued to schools regarding managing food allergies in 2009 by the Maryland State Department of Education and the Department of Health.

Since that voluntary guidance was issued, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) found that over the past 20 years, the rates of children with food allergies has more than doubled and for children with a peanut or tree nut allergy, it has tripled. Life-threatening food allergies and the risk of fatal [anaphylaxis](#) are growing at an even faster rate among [Black and Asian-American children](#).

While food allergies are on the rise nationally, a [2020 study](#) found that children on Medicaid were less than one tenth as likely as children on private health insurance to be diagnosed with a food allergy. This is especially troubling in Maryland as the Kaiser Family Foundation found in 2019 that [one in every three children in Maryland are on Medicaid](#).

As you might imagine, this combination of underdiagnosis coupled with the dramatic increase in food allergy prevalence makes our public schools the site of the majority of our children's anaphylactic attacks as a [2016 NIH study](#) reported with 25% of all attacks occurring in children with "no known food allergies." For the underdiagnosed and diagnosed children with life threatening food allergies, SB 0120 provides a standard of care at our public schools to ensure that regardless of where our children call home in our great state – they are protected and can fully participate in all school functions.

SB 0120 is a reasonable bill that sets appropriate standards for our state's county school districts while giving each school district the freedom to develop specific plans to meet the requirements. In addition, it will provide children, parents, and caregivers with the information they need about what allergens are present in their school meals by posting menu information online. These allergens are the same ones that Marylanders will find labeled at grocery stores under [FALCPA \(Food Allergy Labeling and Consumer Protection Act\)](#). Senate Bill 0120 protects Maryland's school children by providing a critical, reasonable solution while addressing an unmet need. FARE asks for a favorable report.

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