



TESTIMONY FOR HB0696
Primary and Secondary Education - Breakfast and Lunch Programs - Universal Expansion

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Palakovich-Carr
Committee: Ways and Means
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair
Position: **FAVORABLE**

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0696 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members strongly support programs that provide meals to needy children at school. We believe that the Federal School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program not only help children learn by ensuring that they are not hungry at school but also save lives for children who would otherwise be malnourished.

We understand that these programs are expensive and that the state will have to make up the difference in the cost of the meals but we are very heartened that this bill will expand those programs. There are many children in these schools that do not specifically qualify for the free meals, but need them all the same. All children should be able to attend classes without being hungry. If we cannot create an environment for children to learn, we are wasting their potential and starting a cycle that will leave them in poverty.

This bill, if enacted, would require each school that participates in the Federal School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch Program provide meals at no cost to each student in the school beginning in Fiscal Year 2025.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.