



Serving Learners, Families, and the Community

CECIL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOOD & NUTRITION DEPARTMENT

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES CENTER

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Testimony in support of HB 696 – The Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion.

February 14, 2024

Good afternoon, Chairman Atterbeary, Sponsor Delegate Palakovich Carr and Ways and Means Committee Members,

My name is Scott Heckert and I am the Director of Food & Nutrition for Cecil County Public Schools. I am writing in support of HB 696 which would make school breakfast and lunch available to all students at no cost in the State of Maryland.

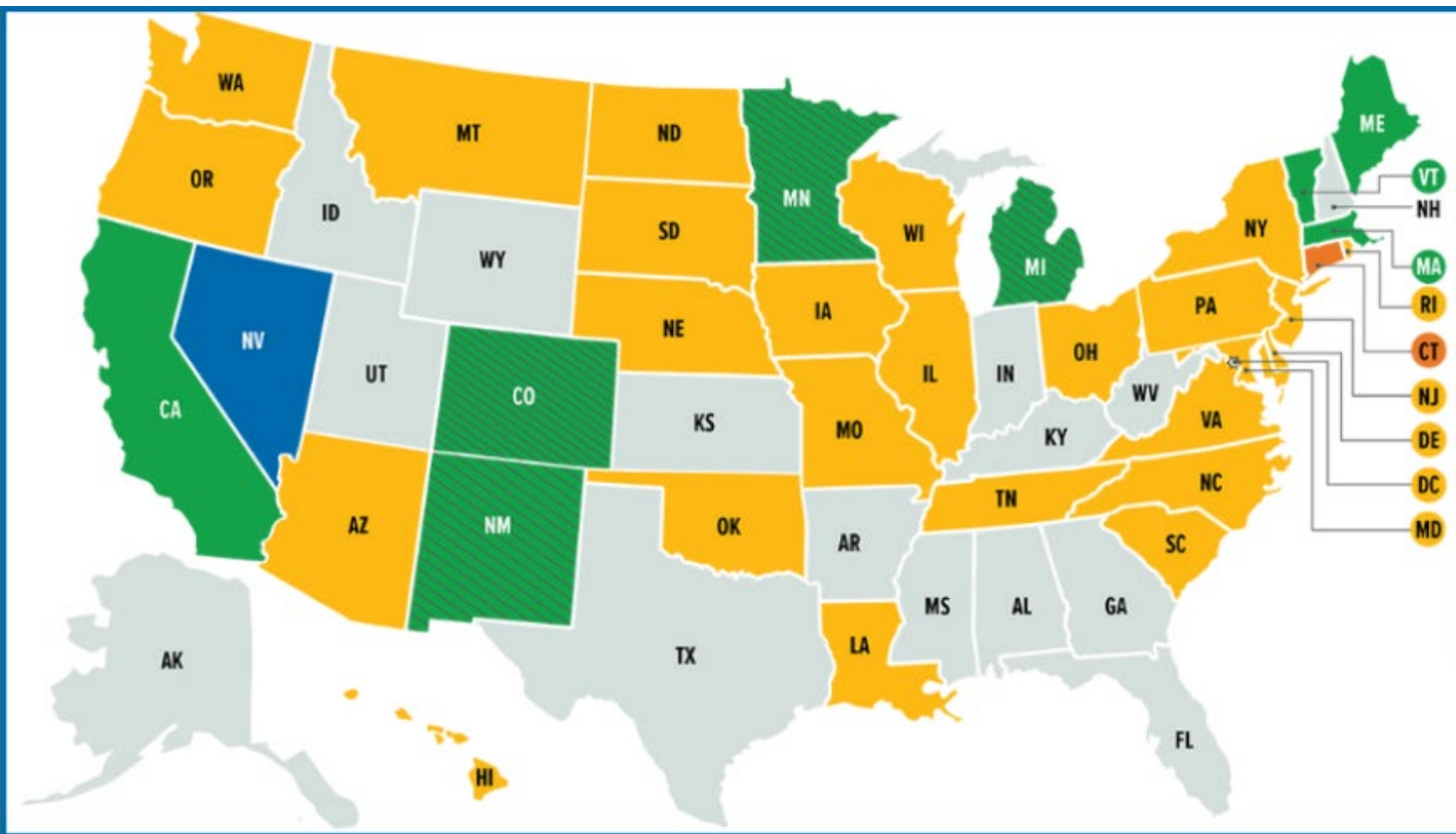
School meals play such a vital role in a student's success in their academics. In our schools which participate in the USDA Community Eligibility Program we have seen improved attendance, a reduction in behavioral referrals, as well as an increase in the consumption of nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables. In addition to the direct benefits to the students, I have spoken with many parents of children who benefit from free school meals in our CEP schools. They tell me what a relief it is to their family budget to not have to purchase food for breakfast and lunch on the days that their kids are in school. This bill would make it possible for us to expand these benefits to all of our students and their families in the district.

Food insecurity is a real problem for many folks in our communities. Children that deal with this reality really struggle to succeed in their academics. With all the change that we are seeing in our state that are focused on making education better in the State of Maryland, making school meals free for all goes hand in hand with that objective. Full bellies lead to full minds. There are already several states in the United States of America that have made this leap. Its time for Maryland to jump on board and make Healthy School Meals available for all students at no cost a part of their school day.

Thank you, Chairman Atterbeary, Sponsor Delegate Palakovich Carr and Committee Members, for allowing me to testify.

UPDATED JANUARY 2024

- Policies Passed, Starting 2022–2023 School Year
- Policies Passed, Starting 2023–2024 School Year
- Policy in Place for 2022–2023 School Year
- Policy in Place for 2022–2023, 2023–2024 School Years
- HSMFA Bills Introduced and/or Coalitions Formed





2023 STATE LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY: YEAR END REVIEW

This report is a summary of key school nutrition state legislation introduced between January 1 and December 31, 2023.

TREND WATCH

Across the nation, there's a notable push towards ensuring every child receives a healthy school meal while at school. 34 out of the 50 states have either implemented or introduced legislation. SNA's [2024 Position Paper](#) urges Congress to offer healthy school meals for all students at no charge to support academic achievement, combat food insecurity and ease burdens on school nutrition staff so they can focus on serving students.

Healthy School Meals for All

a) Permanent: Eight states have permanently legislated healthy school meals for all students. They are:

California	Michigan
Colorado	Minnesota
Maine	New Mexico
Massachusetts	Vermont

b) Temporary: Nevada is offering healthy school meals to all students for the 2023-24 school year. Illinois passed healthy school meals for all for State Fiscal Year 2024, but it remains unfunded.

c) Pending: 27 states and the District of Columbia have introduced legislation to provide school meals for all. These states include:

Arizona	North Carolina
Connecticut	North Dakota
Delaware	Ohio
Hawaii	Oklahoma
Illinois	Oregon
Iowa	Pennsylvania
Louisiana	Rhode Island
Maryland	South Carolina
Missouri	South Dakota
Montana	Tennessee
Nebraska	Virginia
New Jersey	Wisconsin
New York	Washington
Nevada	Washington D.C.

Other Legislative Efforts

In addition to healthy school meals for all, several states are focusing on other areas of the program, such as increasing state reimbursement rates, addressing increasing requests for alternative meals due to dietary or religious needs, policies for unpaid meal debt balances and adjustments to school wellness plans.

SNA state advocacy resources are a collaborative effort intended to support grassroots efforts at the local level. We welcome your updates at advocacy@schoolnutrition.org.



School Breakfast Program Meal Pattern

	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Food Components	Amount of Food ^a per Week		
	(minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) ^{b c}	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^{b c}	0	0	0
Dark green	0	0	0
Red/Orange	0	0	0
Beans and peas (legumes)	0	0	0
Starchy	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Grains (oz eq) ^d	7-10 (1)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq) ^e	0	0	0
Fluid milk ^f (cups)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week			
Min-max calories (kcal) ^{g h}	350-500	400-550	450-600
Saturated fat (% of total calories) ^h	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Target 1 (mg)	≤ 540	≤ 600	≤ 640
<i>Trans</i> fat ^h	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving.		

^a Food items included in each group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is 1/8 cup.

^b One-quarter cup of dried fruit counts as 1/2 cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as 1/2 cup of vegetables. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.

^c Schools must offer 1 cup of fruit daily and 5 cups of fruit weekly. Vegetables may be substituted for fruits, but the first two cups per week of any such substitution must be from the dark green, red/orange, beans/peas (legumes), or "Other vegetables" subgroups, as defined in §210.10(c)(2)(iii) of this chapter.

^d At least 80 percent of grains offered weekly must meet the whole grain-rich criteria specified in FNS guidance, and the remaining grain items offered must be enriched. Schools may substitute 1 oz. eq. of meat/meat alternate for 1 oz. eq. of grains after the minimum daily grains requirement is met.

^e There is no meat/meat alternate requirement.

^f All fluid milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less). Milk may be unflavored or flavored, provided that unflavored milk is offered at each meal service.

^g The average daily calories for a 5-day school week must be within the range (at least the minimum and no more than the maximum values).

^h Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and sodium. Foods of minimal nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent milk fat are not allowed.

**National School Lunch Program Meal Pattern**

	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Food Components	Amount of Food^a per Week		
	(minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) ^b	2½ (½)	2½ (½)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^b	3¾ (¾)	3¾ (¾)	5 (1)
Dark green ^c	½	½	½
Red/Orange ^c	¾	¾	1¼
Beans and peas (legumes) ^c	½	½	½
Starchy ^c	½	½	½
Other ^{c,d}	½	½	¾
Additional Vegetables to Reach Total ^e	1	1	1½
Grains (oz eq) ^f	8-9 (1)	8-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Fluid milk (cups) ^g	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week			
Min-max calories (kcal) ^h	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated fat (% of total calories) ^h	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Interim Target 1 (mg) ^h	≤ 1,230	≤ 1,360	≤ 1,420
Sodium Interim Target 1A (mg) ^h _i	≤ 1,110	≤ 1,225	≤ 1,280
<i>Trans</i> fat ^h	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving.		

^a Food items included in each group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is ⅛ cup.

^b One-quarter cup of dried fruit counts as ½ cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as ½ cup of vegetables. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.

^c Larger amounts of these vegetables may be served.

^d This category consists of “Other vegetables” as defined in paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(E) of this section. For the purposes of the NSLP, the “Other vegetables” requirement may be met with any

additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas (legumes) vegetable subgroups as defined in paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section.

^e Any vegetable subgroup may be offered to meet the total weekly vegetable requirement.

^f At least 80 percent of grains offered weekly must meet the whole grain-rich criteria specified in FNS guidance, and the remaining grain items offered must be enriched.

^g All fluid milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less). Milk may be flavored or flavored, provided that unflavored milk is offered at each meal service.

^h Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and sodium. Foods of minimal nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent are not allowed.

ⁱ Sodium Interim Target 1A must be met no later than July 1, 2023 (SY 2023-2024).

