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BILL NO.: **HB 696**

TITLE: **Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion**

SPONSOR: **Delegate Palakovich Carr**

COMMITTEE: **Ways and Means**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: **February 14, 2024**

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 696 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion. This vital legislation would expand the State Free Feeding Program to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students attending a qualifying school.

No student should be left to attend school on an empty stomach. Students who do not receive proper nutrition generally score lower on exams, struggle more to pay attention in class, and overall experience lower quality of life. Students who cannot afford to purchase breakfast or lunch are left at a significant disadvantage which threatens their ability to perform and break out of the cycle of poverty. Baltimore County is committed to ensuring that each and every student has their fundamental needs met.

House Bill 696 would significantly expand the availability of free meals to students by requiring that school which participate in either the federal School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch program offer free breakfast and lunch to all students at no cost. If passed, this legislation would change the lives of students across the State who struggle with food insecurity. This is a significant step towards eliminating the barriers that keep Maryland’s students from reaching their full potential.

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 696. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.