



MARYLAND

HB696 Testimony IN FAVOR
Ayesha B. Holmes, Maryland Director
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House Ways and Means Committee

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

February 14, 2024

Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Committee,

No Kid Hungry Maryland writes in support of HB696 which proposes universal expansion of Breakfast and Lunch in all Maryland public schools.

Through the No Kid Hungry Maryland campaign, we work with partners, lawmakers, educators, and businesses to identify and eliminate the barriers that may prevent children and families from accessing healthy and nutritious meals.

In 2024, approximately 1 in 8 Maryland kids could face hunger this year, and programs like *Healthy School Meals for All* play a critical role in reducing food insecurity for children. In June 2022, the MD Food Bank reported that in Maryland, roughly 50% of families making less than \$35,000 are food insecure, and overall income brackets, almost 19% are facing food insecurity.¹ This data, tells us that a significant number of children in Maryland risk facing hunger this year. Instituting Healthy School Meals for all would

The policy outlined in HB696 would allow children across the state to access meals at no cost to them. This would decrease stigma for children who might need assistance from the Federal Nutrition Programs addressing needs for children through the Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs) program. Also, this type of program will ensure that children, whose families are living just beyond the FARMs threshold, but are still food insecure, would have access as well.

No Kid Hungry Maryland encourages the Ways and Means Committee to favorably report out on HB696, so that more students can be served without stigma.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. Should you have any questions, or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 410-205-1016 or at aholmes@strength.org.

With Gratitude,

Ayesha B. Holmes, Director
No Kid Hungry Maryland

¹ MFB-Strategy-Group-Research-Report-Food-Insecurity-in-Maryland.pdf