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**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**House Bill 696 – Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and  
 Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion  
 Ways and Means Committee – February 14, 2024**

**SUPPORT**

**Background:** HB696 would alter the standards of the State Free Feeding Program, beginning in fiscal year 2025, to require that if a school participates in the federal School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch Program, then each student in the school must be offered a meal at no cost to the student.

**Written Comments:** The concept of human dignity is well ingrained in Jewish teachings. We believe that all of our neighbors deserve access to the basic resources of food, clothing, and shelter. The School Breakfast and Lunch Program provides funding that makes it possible for schools to offer a nutritious school breakfast and lunch, regardless of a parent's income. Schools receive Federal funds for each breakfast served, and additional funds are provided to schools for each meal served to children who qualify, because of family income, for free or reduced-price meals.

By expanding the program beginning in FY25 and ensuring that the State will cover the remaining cost of meals outside of what the federal programs provide, we are ensuring that students who are in need of nutritious meals will be able to obtain them while at school going forward.

**With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of HB696.**

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies, and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*