



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL**  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

WILL JAWANDO  
COUNCILMEMBER, AT-LARGE  
CHAIR, EDUCATION & CULTURE COMMITTEE  
PLANNING, HOUSING, AND PARKS COMMITTEE

February 12, 2024

**Support for House Bill 696**  
**Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion**

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing to share my strong support for House Bill 696 sponsored by Delegate Palakovich Carr. Addressing hunger is an important key to student success. As Chair of the Education and Culture Committee on the Montgomery County Council, I have heard from many students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels who want to make sure their classmates all have access to healthy food.

In October 2023, my committee held a joint session with Health and Human Services on the county's strategic plan to end hunger. A key component of the strategy is the expansion of free meals in school. Current state and federal programs may exclude needy families who fall outside the eligibility requirements. Language and stigma barriers can impact the ability of families and students to sign up for available programs. In some of the highest-need schools in Montgomery County, lunch debt continues to be a financial weight on students, families, teachers, and administrators who want to make sure every student's mind and belly are fed. We can do better so all our students can thrive inside and outside of the classroom.

House Bill 696 provides a pathway for students to reach their academic goals, improve nutrition, and reduce absenteeism. While Montgomery County is fortunate to have over 800 staff working across Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) making 90,000 meals a day, we need state partners to help us ensure the 160,000 students in MCPS and the thousands of students attending private schools have access to breakfast and lunch.

I am grateful for Delegate Palakovich Carr's efforts and the 60 co-sponsors in the Maryland House who are standing up for food security and student well-being. I appreciate the committee's thoughtful consideration of the bill and urge a favorable report on HB696.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will Jawando".

WILL JAWANDO