

**Testimony to Maryland House Appropriations Committee**  
**Hearing Title: Community Eligibility Provision Bill HB 1254**

March 5, 2025

Greetings Chairman Barnes, Vice Chairman Chang and Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 1254.

My Name is Elizabeth Leach. I am the Director of the Child Nutrition Programs in Montgomery County. We are the employees serving Nutritious Breakfasts and Lunches to the students in Maryland. We are managers, cooks, servers, dishwashers, dietitians, school-based staff and central office personnel.

We see students every day and love when they eat with us because we know the effects of good nutrition on both their health and education, all positive.

The purpose of this Bill is to provide state funding to cover the cost equal to the difference between the federal paid reimbursement rate and the federal free reimbursement rate for individual schools, groups of schools, and school districts implementing the Community Eligibility Provision in eligible schools.

The program is needed for many reasons but the one closest to the school system's mission is support for the student's education.

We found that when the federal government paid for us to feed all students both breakfast and lunch at no cost to them, many good things happened in the school environment such as a significant reduction in discipline referrals, better attendance, less tardiness, more ability to focus on and participate in classes, improved test scores and improved diet quality.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in writing and express my strong support for HB 1254, and I ask for your support for this important improvement to the Child Nutrition Programs in Maryland.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Leach, Director  
Montgomery County Child Nutrition Programs