



HB1254 Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program – Establishment
House Appropriations Committee
March 5, 2025
Position: Favorable

The Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) is a statewide organization dedicated to closing opportunity gaps by expanding both the quantity and quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities for school-aged young people. MOST serves as the backbone organization for the Maryland Coalition for Community Schools. The Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, founded in 2016, advocates for student and family success by leading the charge to expand the Community School Model in Maryland. The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) advocates for adequate funding, equitable policies, and transparent accountability statewide.

MOST, MD4CS & MEC enthusiastically support House Bill 1254 to support expanding the use of community eligibility where appropriate in Maryland. Community Eligibility has several key benefits for students and school districts. Expanding community eligibility also aligns with the work underway at the Governor's Office for Children to determine the methodology for the Neighborhood Indicators of Poverty to replace administratively burdensome methods like the collection of individual Free and Reduced Meal forms.

In areas where poverty is widespread or concentrated, Community Eligibility removes the stigma of being categorized as a "FARM" student. It takes away out-of-pocket costs for families who are often already struggling. Removing these worries will make families more food secure and let students focus on their academics. Expanding Community Eligibility will also make it easier for afterschool programs to offer snacks and supper. It also removes the challenges of collecting individual FARM data for school districts, makes food access more equitable, and allows the districts to implement innovative delivery models. Passing this bill will also send a message to Congress that states like Maryland are committed to community eligibility– a critical tone to strike in the current climate.

MOST, MD4CS, and MEC applaud Delegate Palakovich-Carr and the many cosponsors for supporting House Bill 1254, and we urge a favorable report.

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