

FAVORABLE
Senate Bill 769
Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program - Establishment

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 26, 2025

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Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 769, which would help ensure that students can access free school meals and bridge the gap between funding sources for schools.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents over 40 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Hungry children cannot be expected to fully engage in their learning if they are distracted by their empty bellies. By ensuring that all students have access to healthy school meals, we are making a significant investment in our state's most precious resource. Providing every child in our state with the nutritious meal their growing bodies need to thrive not only helps them be better prepared to learn, it's also the right and humane thing to do.

Educators know all too well that, for far too many of our students, the only source of a nutritious meal they might have access to in a day is at their school. Few things are more gut wrenching to educators than seeing their students suffer, particularly for the want of the sufficient amount of food their growing bodies need to survive and thrive. Hungry children experience real and lasting health impacts that can put their physical, mental, and cognitive development at risk as well as their social-emotional functioning. These impacts lead to deleterious effects such as poorer academic and behavioral outcomes for the children in our schools. Hungry children cannot be expected to fully engage in their learning if their attention is rapt by the rumbling and discomfort in their empty bellies.



This bill pairs nicely with the work the General Assembly has done through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and builds on the last decade of meal expansion bills for students. The General Assembly and education advocates have worked in tandem to bring greater focus to community schools and to provide targeted resources to students living in concentrated poverty. As we work to stand-up community schools around the state with important wrap around services, universal meals is another piece of that puzzle.

MSEA urges a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 769.