

**Testimony of the
Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners
Support with Amendment
House Bill 704 Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program – Establishment**

February 17, 2026

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports the federal Community Eligibility Provision program because it allows us to feed all of our students. The Baltimore City Public School System was the first LEA in Maryland to enter this program.

This legislation establishes the Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program that requires the state to pay the difference between the federal paid reimbursement and the federal free reimbursement rate to those schools and districts that participate in the CEP program. Furthermore, it requires the Governor to set aside \$10 million for the program.

There is a need for a universal feeding bill that would cover all students in the State. This bill is a step in the right direction, but there is a need to provide more funding that would feed all students. While we do not know the exact amount of funding required, based on feedback from the school systems Food and Nutrition Department and being in discussion with other LEAs, it appears that \$10 million would be insufficient to fully fund all CEP-eligible schools in Maryland. This shortfall would create several challenges. Although it may expand access for some schools, it would continue to place school systems, particularly school nutrition departments, in the very difficult position of determining which “eligible” schools could participate and which could not.

The Board understands the fiscal issues that face this State. However, this bill could be used to initially start the process and additional funding could be added over the incoming years.

For the foregoing reasons, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners supports with amendment HB 704 and urges a favorable report with an amendment to increase funding.

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