



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 17, 2026

HOUSE BILL 704

COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY PROVISION EXPANSION PROGRAM – ESTABLISHMENT SUPPORT

Maryland CAPE is our state's chapter and one of 40 state chapters of the Council for American Private Education. Our network includes the Catholic, Christian, Evangelical Lutheran, Friends, Independent, Jewish, Lutheran, Montessori, Muslim, and Seventh Day Adventist school communities. We speak on behalf of over 138,000 nonpublic school students attending over one thousand nonpublic schools across our great state of Maryland. We issue this testimony in support of Senate Bill 704.

SB 704 would complement federal funds from the Community Eligibility Provision of the Child Nutrition Programs by providing additional funding. The funds would be dispensed through county boards, based on the concentration of poverty in public schools and would consider geographic diversity in determining funding prioritization.

Food insecurity has become increasingly salient in discussions regarding improving the lot of vulnerable Marylanders. Food insecurity affects the entire family, but has a particularly negative effect on children and young adults. Without proper sustenance, students are more likely to struggle and suffer emotionally, academically, and physically. Repeated studies show that school food programs for students can lead to improved outcomes in many areas of life. Additionally, such a program lifts some of the economic burden that weighs down on parents struggling to make ends meet.

Food insecurity sadly affects students of public and nonpublic schools alike. Our nonpublic schools serve a diverse array of students, and we seek to ensure that all of them are able to overcome any food insecurity challenges, both for the sake of their own health and in order to increase their learning opportunities.

SB 704 would help ensure better outcomes for students by helping ensure that they receive the food they need. We respectfully ask that you issue a FAVORABLE REPORT on Senate Bill 704.

Thank you.