



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 17, 2026

HOUSE BILL 704

COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY PROVISION EXPANSION PROGRAM – ESTABLISHMENT SUPPORT

Agudath Israel of Maryland, the Mid-Atlantic regional office of Agudath Israel of America, a renowned national Jewish advocacy organization with chapters across the country, speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland and on the behalf of the many Jewish schools and students within our state. We stand today in support of House Bill 704.

HB 704 would complement federal funds from the Community Eligibility Provision of the Child Nutrition Programs by providing additional funding for student meals. 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 a growing concern in efforts to improve the well-being of vulnerable Maryland residents. It impacts families as a whole, with children and young adults experiencing the most severe effects. When students lack proper nutrition, they are more likely to face challenges emotionally, academically, and physically. Research consistently shows that school food programs can lead to better outcomes in various aspects of life. Furthermore, these programs help ease the financial strain on parents who are already struggling to provide for their families.

Our schools are, sadly, no less familiar with student nutrition challenges and food insecurity than other schools are. Many of our schools participate in the CEP, and this bill would help us move closer to ensuring that all students are able to thrive by receiving the nutrition they need to succeed.

We therefore ask that you issue a favorable report on House Bill 704. Thank you very much.