

February 23, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
3 West
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support for Senate Bill 586 Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program
Establishment

Dear Chair Guzzone,

Maryland Latinos Unidos respectfully supports Senate Bill 586, which establishes the Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program to increase access to universal school meals.

Food insecurity is a persistent challenge affecting working families across Maryland. National data from the United States Department of Agriculture show that Latino households experience food insecurity at significantly higher rates than White households. Food insecurity is directly associated with lower academic performance, higher absenteeism, and negative health outcomes for children.

The Community Eligibility Provision allows high poverty schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students without requiring individual applications. Research from the Brookings Institution and the Food Research and Action Center demonstrates that universal meal programs increase participation, reduce stigma, improve attendance, and support academic achievement.

For Latino students, many of whom are eligible for free or reduced price meals, universal access removes administrative barriers and stigma that can discourage participation. It also ensures that immigrant parents who may face language barriers are not excluded from benefits due to paperwork challenges.

Implications for Latino and immigrant communities

Senate Bill 586 advances educational equity and child well being by ensuring consistent nutrition access. For Latino families, expansion of the Community Eligibility Provision means:

- Reduced food insecurity
- Improved student attendance
- Greater classroom engagement
- Reduced administrative burden for parents

Maryland Latinos Unidos can work with school systems to ensure families receive clear communication in Spanish and other languages regarding meal access and related benefits.

For these reasons, Maryland Latinos Unidos respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 586.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.
Communications and Public Affairs Specialist
Maryland Latinos Unidos
corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org