



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

SB 586-Community Eligibility Provision Expansion Program—Establishment

POSITION: Support

BY: Linda Kohn, LWVMD President

DATE: February 25, 2026

The League of Women Voters at the national, state, and local levels have long-established public policy positions that derive from the Leagues' fundamental position that "the needs of children are a high priority of government." And if a federal welfare program does not achieve "an adequate level of benefits, some states will need to supplement federal payments." Maryland's League of Women Voters supports SB 586 1) because the bill recognizes that the limitations on the current federal CEP reimbursement structure prevents some schools from offering free breakfast and lunch to all of its students; and 2) because of recent cuts to SNAP and Medicaid at the federal level, the number of students who are able to directly certify for free school meals is threatened.

The intention of SB 586 to establish a \$10 million state Community Eligibility Provision supplement fund would protect the financial sustainability of the program in existing CEP schools as well as making the program possible in other Maryland schools. Expanding the number of CEP schools in Maryland would help support struggling families who are fighting inflationary food prices and wrestling with meeting the basic needs of the family.

That children need enough healthy food to be attentive and active students is a truth universally acknowledged. The League supports the State's responsibility to provide funding to high poverty schools and school districts using CEP to provide free meals to all students.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland, representing over 2,000 Marylanders, urges a favorable report on SB 586.