



Feeding Bodies. Fueling Minds.™

Maryland HB 315 & SB 740

State Department of Education - Breakfast and Lunch Programs - Funding (Maryland Cares for Kids Act)

Position: **Support**

Maryland School Nutrition Association

Marla LeTourneau, State Legislative Chair

The Maryland School Nutrition Association (MdSNA) represents the thousands of school food service employees across the State of Maryland who served over 30 million meals to students last year. As the State Legislative Chair of the Association, I am honored to provide this testimony on their behalf.

This Bill asks for the State to pay the student share of the reduced priced meal cost. This cost, while minimal, does deter students from taking part in the federal school meals program. The Maryland School Nutrition Association is in support of this Bill as long as the funding is provided from new sources, and not utilizing current funding related to State Administrative Expenses; which are paid to schools on a bi-monthly basis. Funding this Bill from existing revenues paid to Local Education Agencies (LEA's) will actually result in a negative revenue stream for child nutrition programs that may already be struggling financially.

Many of the families in Maryland who fall within the income guidelines for a reduced-priced breakfast (\$0.30) or lunch (0.40) are unable to afford these meals. In addition, these children are most at risk of not having food at home that can be packed for a lunch to bring to school. As a result, these students are attending school hungry with an inability to participate in child nutrition programs. Studies have continually proven that hungry children cannot learn at the same rate as their well-nourished counterparts. Additionally, reduced price eligible children that are not able to provide their own funding for meals will often accrue debt in school cafeterias that may never be repaid. The federal government does not cover funding for families who accrue unpaid debts.

To emphasize, this Bill asks for LEA's to provide meals to reduced priced eligible children at no cost with reimbursement for those meals coming from state funds. MdSNA is in support of this Bill assuming new funding is provided. The LEAs responsible for budgets associated with feeding all students within Maryland public schools cannot absorb this cost. Full reimbursement is needed.

Therefore, the Maryland School Nutrition Association requests a **favorable** report on HB 315 & SB740.

Thank you for your time and attention to reviewing this testimony.