

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 579

Primary and Secondary Education - Breakfast and Lunch Programs - Universal Expansion

Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee

February 14, 2024

Good afternoon Chairman Feldman, Sponsor Hettleman and members of the committee.

My name is Cody Wilt. I am the President of the Maryland School Nutrition Association. I am here today to express the strong support for SB 579 by our entire statewide organization in all Maryland school districts. We are the program operators, managers, cooks and servers in each school and district.

The purpose of this bill is to serve all students a nutritious breakfast and lunch each day at no cost to them as part of their school day experience.

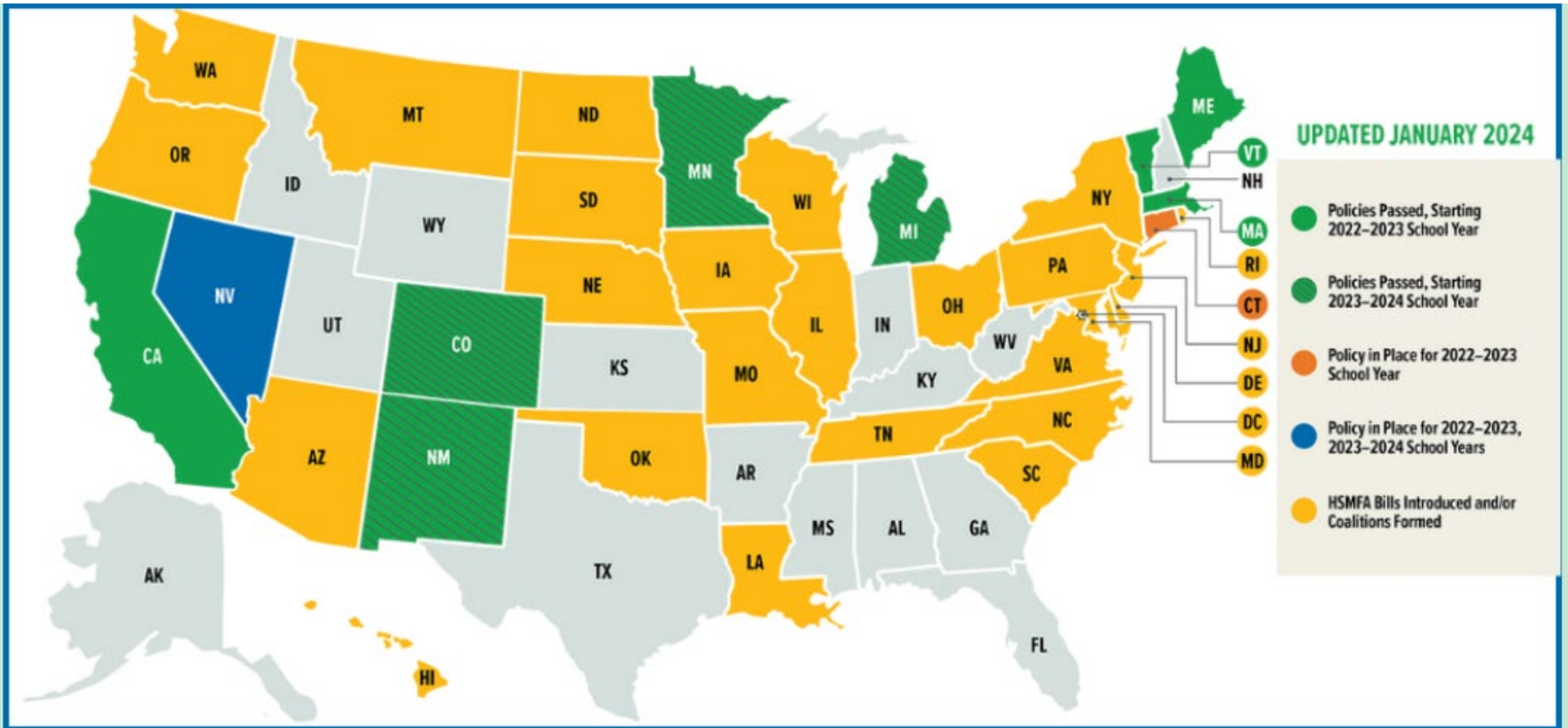
We see the need for this Bill each day in schools and recognize what school meals do for students. On the Universal Meals Program both during Covid when it was federally funded and now in the 7 states operating the Universal School Meals Program.

Current Research Reviews have found that Universal Free School Meals are associated with:

- Better attendance
- Less tardiness
- More ability to focus on and participate in classes
- Improved test scores
- Improved diet quality

The Maryland Legislature has shown strong support for the Blueprint for Education. This Universal Free Breakfast and Lunch Program is the best support for students in their educational experience by helping them get ready to learn because "A hungry child cannot learn!"

Thank you, Chairman Feldman, Sponsor Hettleman and members of the committee, for allowing me to testify.





2023 STATE LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY: YEAR END REVIEW

This report is a summary of key school nutrition state legislation introduced between January 1 and December 31, 2023.

TREND WATCH

Across the nation, there's a notable push towards ensuring every child receives a healthy school meal while at school. 34 out of the 50 states have either implemented or introduced legislation. SNA's [2024 Position Paper](#) urges Congress to offer healthy school meals for all students at no charge to support academic achievement, combat food insecurity and ease burdens on school nutrition staff so they can focus on serving students.

Healthy School Meals for All

a) Permanent: Eight states have permanently legislated healthy school meals for all students. They are:

California	Michigan
Colorado	Minnesota
Maine	New Mexico
Massachusetts	Vermont

b) Temporary: Nevada is offering healthy school meals to all students for the 2023-24 school year. Illinois passed healthy school meals for all for State Fiscal Year 2024, but it remains unfunded.

c) Pending: 27 states and the District of Columbia have introduced legislation to provide school meals for all. These states include:

Arizona	North Carolina
Connecticut	North Dakota
Delaware	Ohio
Hawaii	Oklahoma
Illinois	Oregon
Iowa	Pennsylvania
Louisiana	Rhode Island
Maryland	South Carolina
Missouri	South Dakota
Montana	Tennessee
Nebraska	Virginia
New Jersey	Wisconsin
New York	Washington
Nevada	Washington D.C.

Other Legislative Efforts

In addition to healthy school meals for all, several states are focusing on other areas of the program, such as increasing state reimbursement rates, addressing increasing requests for alternative meals due to dietary or religious needs, policies for unpaid meal debt balances and adjustments to school wellness plans.

SNA state advocacy resources are a collaborative effort intended to support grassroots efforts at the local level. We welcome your updates at advocacy@schoolnutrition.org.



School Breakfast Program Meal Pattern

	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Food Components	Amount of Food ^a per Week		
	(minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) ^{b c}	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^{b c}	0	0	0
Dark green	0	0	0
Red/Orange	0	0	0
Beans and peas (legumes)	0	0	0
Starchy	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Grains (oz eq) ^d	7-10 (1)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq) ^e	0	0	0
Fluid milk ^f (cups)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week			
Min-max calories (kcal) ^{g h}	350-500	400-550	450-600
Saturated fat (% of total calories) ^h	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Target 1 (mg)	≤ 540	≤ 600	≤ 640
<i>Trans</i> fat ^h	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving.		

^a Food items included in each group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is 1/8 cup.

^b One-quarter cup of dried fruit counts as 1/2 cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as 1/2 cup of vegetables. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.

^c Schools must offer 1 cup of fruit daily and 5 cups of fruit weekly. Vegetables may be substituted for fruits, but the first two cups per week of any such substitution must be from the dark green, red/orange, beans/peas (legumes), or “Other vegetables” subgroups, as defined in §210.10(c)(2)(iii) of this chapter.

^d At least 80 percent of grains offered weekly must meet the whole grain-rich criteria specified in FNS guidance, and the remaining grain items offered must be enriched. Schools may substitute 1 oz. eq. of meat/meat alternate for 1 oz. eq. of grains after the minimum daily grains requirement is met.

^e There is no meat/meat alternate requirement.

^f All fluid milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less). Milk may be unflavored or flavored, provided that unflavored milk is offered at each meal service.

^g The average daily calories for a 5-day school week must be within the range (at least the minimum and no more than the maximum values).

^h Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and sodium. Foods of minimal nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent milk fat are not allowed.

**National School Lunch Program Meal Pattern**

	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Food Components	Amount of Food^a per Week		
	(minimum per day)		
Fruits (cups) ^b	2½ (½)	2½ (½)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^b	3¾ (¾)	3¾ (¾)	5 (1)
Dark green ^c	½	½	½
Red/Orange ^c	¾	¾	1¼
Beans and peas (legumes) ^c	½	½	½
Starchy ^c	½	½	½
Other ^{c,d}	½	½	¾
Additional Vegetables to Reach Total ^e	1	1	1½
Grains (oz eq) ^f	8-9 (1)	8-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Meats/Meat Alternates (oz eq)	8-10 (1)	9-10 (1)	10-12 (2)
Fluid milk (cups) ^g	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week			
Min-max calories (kcal) ^h	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated fat (% of total calories) ^h	<10	<10	<10
Sodium Interim Target 1 (mg) ^h	≤ 1,230	≤ 1,360	≤ 1,420
Sodium Interim Target 1A (mg) ^h _i	≤ 1,110	≤ 1,225	≤ 1,280
<i>Trans</i> fat ^h	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of <i>trans</i> fat per serving.		

^a Food items included in each group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is ⅛ cup.

^b One-quarter cup of dried fruit counts as ½ cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as ½ cup of vegetables. No more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.

^c Larger amounts of these vegetables may be served.

^d This category consists of “Other vegetables” as defined in paragraph (c)(2)(iii)(E) of this section. For the purposes of the NSLP, the “Other vegetables” requirement may be met with any

additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas (legumes) vegetable subgroups as defined in paragraph (c)(2)(iii) of this section.

^e Any vegetable subgroup may be offered to meet the total weekly vegetable requirement.

^f At least 80 percent of grains offered weekly must meet the whole grain-rich criteria specified in FNS guidance, and the remaining grain items offered must be enriched.

^g All fluid milk must be fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less). Milk may be flavored or flavored, provided that unflavored milk is offered at each meal service.

^h Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, *trans* fat, and sodium. Foods of minimal nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent are not allowed.

ⁱ Sodium Interim Target 1A must be met no later than July 1, 2023 (SY 2023-2024).

