

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 Megan Doran. I am the Past 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 the universal expansion of the breakfast and lunch programs to all primary and secondary students in Maryland regardless of household income.

Passing this bill would be helpful to the students and community of St. Mary's County. Research has shown that participation in school meals has a sizable impact on students' educational attainment. Access to free school meals in particular improves student health and attendance, reduces disciplinary infractions, and increases test scores among marginalized groups of students. Free meals also can reduce lunch stigma and school administrative burdens.

I, Megan Doran, am in support of this bill as Past President of the Maryland School Nutrition Association and Director of Food and Nutrition Services at St. Mary's County Public Schools.

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