



Serving Learners, Families, and the Community

CECIL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOOD & NUTRITION DEPARTMENT

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES CENTER

900 NORTH EAST ROAD • NORTH EAST, MD 21901

phone: 410.996.6257 • fax: 410.287-4652 • www.ccps.org

Jeffrey A. Lawson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Diana B. Hawley
President, Board of Education

Testimony in support of SB 579 – The Primary and Secondary Education – Breakfast and Lunch Programs – Universal Expansion.

February 14, 2024

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

My name is Scott Heckert and I am the Director of Food & Nutrition for Cecil County Public Schools. I am writing in support of SB 579 which would make school breakfast and lunch available to all students at no cost in the State of Maryland.

School meals play such a vital role in a student's success in their academics. In our schools which participate in the USDA Community Eligibility Program we have seen improved attendance, a reduction in behavioral referrals, as well as an increase in the consumption of nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables. In addition to the direct benefits to the students, I have spoken with many parents of children who benefit from free school meals in our CEP schools. They tell me what a relief it is to their family budget to not have to purchase food for breakfast and lunch on the days that their kids are in school. This bill would make it possible for us to expand these benefits to all our students and their families in the district.

Food insecurity is a real problem for many folks in our communities. Children that deal with this reality really struggle to succeed in their academics. With all the changes that we are seeing in our state that are focused on making education better in the State of Maryland, making school meals free for all goes hand in hand with that objective. Full bellies lead to full minds. There are already several states in the United States of America that have made this leap. Its time for Maryland to jump on board and make Healthy School Meals available for all students at no cost a part of their school day.

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