

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Bernard C. “Jack” Young**  
*Mayor, City of Baltimore*

**Linda Chinnia**  
*Chair, Baltimore City Board of  
School Commissioners*

**Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises**  
*Chief Executive Officer*

## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 1450 Education – Food Waste Grant Program - Established**

March 6, 2020

Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) supports HB 1450. We believe that a grant program for school districts to apply for and receive funds to reduce food waste and educate students and staff about food waste would be beneficial.

School cafeterias are our nation’s largest restaurant chain and produce a tremendous amount of food waste each year – from a case of lettuce that spoils in the fridge before becoming a salad to a half-finished carton of milk dumped in the trash at the end of a lunch period. This waste represents a lost opportunity to get students to consume healthy meals and comes with high food and disposal costs as well as a negative environmental impact – nearly all this waste ends up in landfills where it produces methane, a highly destructive greenhouse gas, or in incinerators, where noxious gases are released into our atmosphere.

Baltimore City Schools’ cafeterias serve more than 90,000 meals per day (including breakfast, lunch, snack and supper) and spend more than \$20 million dollars on food annually. Our district’s schools represent opportunity-rich hubs for education and engagement on food waste.

By reducing food waste, districts can achieve multiple goals, including:

- Promoting student health through increased consumption of fruits and vegetables (for example, slicing oranges instead of serving them whole significantly decreases waste)
- Reducing food trucked to landfills and incinerators that often disproportionately impact communities of color;
- Reducing food and waste management costs for school districts as they improve systems to order and prepare the proper amounts of food;
- Decrease food insecurity by getting food to youth and families who may not have enough food; and
- Building awareness among youth of the role that food and food waste play in our local, regional and global ecosystems.

City Schools is already working to reduce food waste and mitigate the impact of our operations on the environment, however, this requires extensive employee training and active student engagement, which we hope can be supported by this grant. With strategies such as right-sizing food orders, improving food displays on the lunch line, share tables, and composting, it will be possible to change practices and behaviors among our staff and students in a more large-scale way. Additionally, this year our district has switched to compostable cutlery and trays. This will

help improve air quality since most of Baltimore City's trash is incinerated, and when burned, plastic and foam release gases that contribute to our city's high rate of asthma.

City Schools is a proud partner with the Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) which is the proposed reviewer of the grant applications. We currently have 30 schools with MAEOE's Green School certification, and we believe they are knowledgeable about school greening efforts and will be very capable at identifying strong proposals.

This grant program offers the opportunity for our youth to be stewards of the environment and learn about the important role that food plays in the agricultural, health, and waste arenas. When our students learn about the food system and the implications of food waste, they come to understand their relationship to their local, regional, and global ecosystem and the specific and positive steps they can take.

For all these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report of HB 1450.

For additional information, please contact City Schools Government Affairs:

Melissa Broome  
Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs  
MCBroome@bcps.k12.md.us  
(443) 525-3038

Dawana Sterrette  
Director of Legislative and Government Affairs  
DSterrette@bcps.k12.md.us  
(443) 250-0190