



Maryland HB 1152

Public Schools – Student Meal Programs and Policies

Recommended Position:

Support _____ Support with Amendment(s) X Oppose _____ No Position _____

As President of The Maryland School Nutrition Association (MdSNA), this testimony is presented to provide a voice for our members. The MdSNA represents the thousands of passionate school nutrition professionals committed to ensuring students have access to healthy school meals. Our members continuously work throughout the year to enroll eligible students in the free or reduced-priced meal program, so students in economically challenged families have immediate access to nutritious school meals.

HB 1152 reinforces current policies mandated by the USDA for school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The bill does create a number of changes as it relates to “unpaid meal debt” in terms of communication and management at both the central office and school level. Additionally, HB 1152 requires that a printed meal benefit application is available in multiple languages. This mandate will increase printing and distribution costs as many school districts who have successfully shifted to online and/or electronic applications. HB 1152 Section 7-125(E)(1)(II) should be amended to remove this requirement.

Maryland school nutrition professionals adhere to all applicable Federal and State regulations relating to programs: National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Program (CACFP), Afterschool Snack Program, and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). HB 1152 will require additional operational and reporting requirements onto local education agencies, increasing operating budgets.

HB 1152 mandates school districts provide meals to students however does not include funding to cover unpaid meal debts. The USDA prohibits federal funds to be used to cover the debt, thus making local school systems liable to clear the “uncollectable” debt. As of January 31, 2020, Maryland’s unpaid meal debt is \$1,049,352.00. Funds would have to be shifted from education support to cover this debt. HB 1152 should be amended to establish a new State fund program to refund local education agencies for all costs relating to unpaid meal debt as Federal funds are not to be used if and when the parent/guardian will not pay and local school systems cannot absorb this cost.

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

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President, Maryland School Nutrition Association