

BILL: Senate Bill 756
TITLE: Primary and Secondary Education - Breakfast Program - School Requirements
(Breakfast After the Bell Act)
DATE: March 15, 2016
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation Committee
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, opposes Senate Bill 756.

MABE recognizes the importance of developing healthy school environments, which includes providing high quality health and physical education programs as well as meeting the nutritional needs of students through school breakfasts, lunches, afterschool meals, and vending machine policies. Local boards oppose this legislation because it would require each local board of education to develop a specific method of providing "Breakfast After the Bell" which may not be deemed the best approach by the local school system in all circumstances.

Federal and state standards for school nutrition continue to be reformed and enhanced to address the national epidemics of juvenile diabetes and obesity. At the same time, child hunger and inequitable access to healthy meals impacts far too many students as an obstacle to learning. Therefore, the federal government is also engaged in promoting improvements in expanding access to high quality school meal programs.

The 2010 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization, entitled the "The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act," mandated major reforms in school meal programs to improve the nutritional value of the meals served to Maryland students each day. In response to federal reforms, and local needs, school systems are increasingly involved in summer and weekend meal programs; and partnerships to help ensure daily access to healthy food for all students. This 2010 law reauthorized six major nutrition programs, including school breakfast and lunch. Since 2010, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has promulgated or proposed numerous regulations and policies to implement the law.

Today, another 5-year reauthorization bill is being considered, the Improving Child Nutrition, Integrity and Access Act of 2016. In this context, Maryland's local school systems and food service programs respectfully request that no new state requirements for specific school nutrition programs be enacted at this time.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 756.