

BILL: House Bill 257
TITLE: Education - Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program - Administration
DATE: February 9, 2017
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, supports House Bill 257.

MABE strongly supports this bill in order to meaningfully improve the way high schools participating in the Maryland Meals for Achievement In-classroom Breakfast Program (MMFA) are able to serve breakfast. The much needed change is simple; this bill would allow meals to be served in any part of the school, including from "Grab and Go" carts, after arrival of students to the school. The bill also clarifies that schools that provide breakfasts in the classroom through MMFA, to students at all grade levels, must serve the breakfasts after arrival of students to the school.

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 support this legislation because it would provide additional state funding to ensure a universally free school meal program for more students.

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 reauthorization bill is due to be considered in Congress, and MABE will be advocating for additional federal funding and flexibility for local school systems to deliver healthy meals to all students. In this context, local boards would greatly appreciate the additional flexibility provided by this bill to serve breakfast to more high school students.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 257.