

BILL: Senate Bill 818
TITLE: Education - Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program - Eligibility and Annual Appropriation
DATE: March 7, 2018
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the state's local boards of education, supports Senate Bill 818 because it would significantly improve and enhance the assurance of annual funding for the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) breakfast program.

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 much needed state funding to ensure that schools with a significant concentration of poverty, but which fall below the 40% threshold of eligible students, can continue to provide in-class breakfasts for students. The bill's one-year hold harmless provision would prevent the dramatic termination of the MMFA funding and allow time for budget decisions to address school food service and student nutritional needs.

School systems place a very high priority on ensuring daily access to healthy food for all students – and advocate on the state and federal levels for the funding essential to make these services possible. 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 engaged in providing breakfast, lunch and evening meal programs throughout the school year; and summer and weekend meal programs throughout the year. As future reauthorization bills are considered in Congress, 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 additional state aid to ensure the expanded school meal services made possible by this bill.

Child hunger and inequitable access to healthy meals impacts far too many students as an obstacle to learning. Therefore, MABE and local boards of education are joining advocates for ending childhood hunger and promoting the health and learning of students in strong support for this and other legislation in 2018. MABE greatly appreciates the General Assembly's allocation of state resources to support these efforts.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 818.