

The Maryland Cares for Kids Act

Support children in families struggling to get by on low wages by removing school meal fees for 45,364 low-income students in Maryland

School breakfast and lunch programs improve health, support learning, and reduce **food insecurity** — the limited or uncertain access to enough healthy food — a condition which affects 17% of all Maryland households with children.¹

Bill Sponsors
Senator Richard Madaleno
Delegate Sheila Hixson

Unfortunately, many low-income students can't participate in the school meal programs because their household income is too high to qualify for free meals, yet too low to afford the reduced-price school meal **co-pays**. As a result, reduced-price eligible students are more likely to incur cafeteria debts and often go without the food they need. In fact, these students are **26% less likely to eat school meals**, compared to students that qualify for free school meals.²

Did you know that a single parent with one child who earns just \$22,000 a year *does not* qualify for free meals? This family meets the federal income guidelines for **reduced-price** school meals and therefore must pay co-pays for school meals. Most of the families eligible for reduced-price meals are **struggling to make ends meet**, especially considering the high cost of living in Maryland. In fact, 29% of the families in this income group are food insecure.³

Eliminating reduced-price meal fees will decrease food insecurity and poverty for more than 45,000 students across the state!

While many interventions target high-poverty schools, this bill **directly targets the children** who are in need, regardless of which school they attend. Approximately \$3.3M annually in state funding will provide more than **45,000 low-income students** with access to school meals at no cost to the student or family.

Sign the letter of support here: tinyURL.com/MDCaresforKids

¹ USDA food insecurity data for 2013-2015

² Maryland State Department of Education data for SY 2013-2014

³ Ralston, K., Treen, K., Coleman-Jensen, A. and Guthrie, J. 2017. Children's Food Security and USDA Child Nutrition Programs, USDA, ERS.



Number of Students Eligible for Reduced-Price School Meals, By County

Allegany	669	Harford	2,045
Anne Arundel	3,836	Howard	2,138
Baltimore City	*	Kent	66
Baltimore County	7,199	Montgomery	9,647
Calvert	490	Prince George's	10,357
Caroline	358	Queen Anne's	283
Carroll	710	Somerset	*
Cecil	823	St Mary's	776
Charles	1,480	Talbot	215
Dorchester	*	Washington	1,211
Frederick	1,737	Wicomico	593
Garrett	356	Worcester	375

45,364 students in Maryland will benefit from the Maryland Cares for Kids Act

*All students in Baltimore City, Dorchester County and Somerset County Public Schools already have access to free school breakfast and lunch due to district-wide implementation of the Community Eligibility Provision.

The chart was compiled using Maryland State Department of Education enrollment data for the 2016-2017 school year, available at <http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/School-Community-Nutrition/FreeReducedPriceMealStatistics.aspx>

Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines for School Meals

	Free Meals	Reduced-Price Meals	Paid Meals
	Household income must be below 130% of the Federal Poverty Level to qualify for free school meals	Students with household incomes between 130-185% of the Federal Poverty Level qualify for reduced-price school meals	Students with household incomes above 185% of the Federal Poverty Level pay the full price for school meals
Two People in the Household	< \$21,112 year	\$21,113 — \$30,044 year	> \$30,045 year
Three People in the Household	< \$26,546 year	\$26,547 — \$37,777 year	> \$37,778 year
Four People in the Household	< \$31,980 year	\$31,981 — \$45,510 year	> \$45,511 year