



## House Bill 273

### *Education – Summer Meals Expansion Grant Program - Established*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

Date: February 9, 2017

To: Ways and Means Committee

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 273 as it creates a mechanism to leverage state and local resources to increase the number of low-income children provided free meals during the summer.

HB 273 aims to expand the reach of the federally funded Summer Foods Service Program (Summer Meals Program). It authorizes Summer Meals Program sponsors to apply for supplemental money from a competitive state-county matching grant fund to expand their ability to provide free and nutritious meals to children in need. Many low-income children across the state rely on the Summer Meals Program to ensure they do not go hungry when school is no longer in session. While the State administers this federal program, no state funds are currently provided to sponsors offering summer meals.

Many county school systems, local government agencies, nonprofit community organizations, and faith-based organizations participate in the Summer Meals Program as sponsoring agencies. Unfortunately, federal funds only go so far. In areas in which the needs exceed the available sponsor resources, some children may go without food. Counties do not want to see children in their communities go hungry.

This bill helps to fill those gaps and does so in a way that ensures additional funding, if provided, is reasonably shouldered between the state and local governments. Applicants are required to show evidence that the county has committed to matching the state grant funds before the funds may be approved. This protects local governments from being obligated to provide resources they do not have. It also protects against funds going to sponsors that may not merit the resources and ensures that state grant funds are being provided to sponsors that have the support of their communities.

HB 273 creates an efficient and effective system for leveraging state and local resources to maximize the number of children fed under the Summer Meals Program. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 273.