



House Bill 1235

Education - Maryland Meals for Achievement In-Classroom Breakfast Program - Eligibility and Annual Appropriation

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Ways & Means and Appropriations Committees

Date: March 13, 2018

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1235 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill would provide more funding consistency for schools that fleetingly fall below the 40% free and reduced-price meal (FRPM) student population eligibility threshold for the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) program.

HB 1235 would allow schools that fall below the 40% FRPM student population eligibility threshold for the MMFA to remain eligible to participate in the program for one year. However, schools would no longer be eligible for MMFA funding if their percentage of FRPM-eligible students fell below 40% in a second consecutive year. The bill also requires the governor to annually appropriate at least \$11.9 million to the MMFA.

Under current law, MMFA provides a free in-class breakfast to all students enrolled in schools in which 40% or more of the students qualify for FRPMs. To be eligible, local education agencies and schools must meet a minimum level of students eligible for free meals (40% of enrollment) in the year prior to implementing the option, agree to serve free lunches and breakfasts to all students, and agree to cover any programmatic costs not provided in federal assistance.

While MACo supports the premise of this bill, counties are cognizant of the fiscal challenges at the state level, and are concerned that a concrete spending mandate could compromise other education priorities. If the Committee seeks to preserve the proposed program without the rigid funding mandate, MACo would support the following amendment:

On page 3 strike in their entirety lines 26 through 27 and substitute:

“ THE GOVERNOR MAY ANNUALLY INCLUDE AN APPROPRIATION IN THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE DEPARTMENT TO DISBURSE TO ELIGIBLE COUNTY BOARDS OR SPONSORING AGENCIES UNDER THIS SUBTITLE.”

MACo supports the effort to strengthen and expand the MMFA program, and would support an amended bill to address potential fiscal implications at the state level. For these reasons, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 1235.