

November 23, 2015

Dear Governor Hogan,

The Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger is a diverse coalition that works to decrease the number of children and families suffering from hunger in our state. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 12.5%, or 1 in 8 people in Maryland, are food insecure. Marylanders that are food insecure may skip meals, eat less than they need, or even go hungry because they don't have reliable access to the healthy food they need to live a healthy life.

We thank you for your support of the *The Hunger-Free Schools Act of 2015*. This important legislation is already making a difference in the lives of thousands of children, families, and schools across the state by increasing access to the Community Eligibility Provision – a new school meal funding option. Since you signed the bill into law earlier this year, there are more than two hundred additional Hunger-Free Schools. Over 97,000 students in Maryland now attend a Hunger-Free School – a testament of the power of our partnership.

As you develop the FY 2017 operating budget, we respectfully request that you continue to invest in and support funding for the following programs that reduce child hunger.

Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) is a state-funded Breakfast in the Classroom program that reimburses school districts for costs not covered by federal funds when they provide an in-classroom breakfast to all students regardless of family income. Since MMFA's creation 17 years ago, hundreds of Maryland schools have successfully increased access to the School Breakfast Program. Studies have shown that when students eat breakfast in the classroom, their educational performance is enhanced; health is improved; and behavioral issues are reduced.¹ In addition, every dollar of state funding spent on MMFA leverages \$5.46 in federal reimbursements. In the 2013-2014 school year, an investment of just over \$5 million leveraged more than \$28 million in federal reimbursement. Currently, MMFA is funded at \$6.9 million, allowing over 230,000 students in 462 schools to access free classroom breakfast. However, the current funding only allows for 54% of eligible schools to participate in MMFA – a best-practice and national model.

- ➔ The Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger thanks you for maintaining MMFA funding in the FY 2016 budget and urges full funding, \$12.2 million, for the Maryland Meals for Achievement program in the Maryland State Department of Education's Aid to Education Budget.

¹ J. M. Murphy et al. (2001, October). *Maryland Meals for Achievement Year III Final Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED460784.pdf>.

School meals are a vital strategy to ending child hunger. Under federal regulations, family incomes below 130% of the Federal Poverty Line qualify for free school meals and incomes between 130% and 185% of the Federal Poverty Line qualify for reduced-price school meals. For example, a single parent with one child that earns between \$20,449 and \$29,101 a year qualifies for reduced-priced school meals. However, most of these families are still struggling to make ends meet, especially in states such as Maryland with a high cost of living. Currently, students in the reduced-price payment category pay about \$0.30 per school breakfast and \$0.40 per school lunch meal. For a family with two children, the cost is over \$250 per school year. With an investment of approximately \$2.5M from the State, we will put money back into the pockets of 36,000 struggling families with kids. These middle-class families could use those dollars to buy the basics from local businesses, pay down bills, or maybe even to build up some savings. Eliminating the reduced price category also benefits schools since it is often the reduced-price eligible students that run up cafeteria debts, many of which never get paid.

- ➔ The Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger requests \$2.5 million in funding to support children and schools by eliminating the “reduced-price” school meal category.

Afterschool and summer programming are essential investments as they keep Maryland children safe when their parents are working and engage children in enriching activities. Additionally, afterschool and summer programs often provide access to a nutritious meal when school is closed. New research demonstrates that more consistent time spent in afterschool activities during the elementary school years is linked to eliminating the gap in math achievement by the fifth grade.² Further, investing in out-of-school time learning leverages federal funding, and can bring in three dollars for every dollar of state funding.³

- ➔ The Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger urges \$5 million to support the Maryland Afterschool and Summer Opportunity Fund (MASOF), which will expand access to afterschool and summer programming for Maryland’s children.

Additional Priorities:

The Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger supports our partner members in the following initiatives.

- We support adjustments to Maryland’s Earned Income Tax Credit to include younger workers, a campaign led by Maryland CASH Campaign.
- We support expansion of pre-kindergarten to a universal model.

² Pierce, K.M., Auger, A. and Vandell, D.L. (April 2013). Narrowing the Achievement Gap: Consistency and Intensity of Structured Activities During Elementary School. Unpublished paper presented at the Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting, Seattle, WA.

³ Brown et. al. (2002, September). *The Costs and Benefits of After School Programs: The Estimated Effects of the After School Education and Safety Program Act of 2002*. The Rose Institute of Claremont-McKenna College.

- We support the statewide program that offers financial incentives for using federal nutrition assistance benefits to access healthy food at Maryland farmers markets. This successful pilot improves nutrition, keeps federal benefit dollars in the local economy, and supports local agricultural producers. We endorse the Maryland Farmers Market Association (MDFMA), a statewide nonprofit that increases food access by connecting Marylanders with markets and providing coordinated services to markets managers and farmers.
- We support the opportunity for all workers to earn paid sick leave, a campaign led by the Working Matters Coalition. More than 700,000 Maryland workers cannot earn paid sick days and often go to work sick, send sick children to school or daycare, or in the worst situations, lose their job because they cannot come to work. The lack of earned sick leave contributes to the cycle of poverty and hunger.
- We support technological modernization to the Department of Human Resources CARES system to allow for increased program efficiencies.

Thank you for your partnership, support, and tireless efforts on behalf of the most vulnerable Marylanders.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Wilson, Director
Maryland Hunger Solutions

David Sloan, Director
Maryland No Kid Hungry

Melissa Moore, Chair
Baltimore Partnership to End Childhood Hunger

Becky Wagner, Executive Director
Advocates for Children and Youth

Amy Crone, Executive Director
Maryland Farmers Market Association

Susan Krehbiel, Director of Congregational Advocacy
Maryland Interfaith Legislative Committee

Jonathon Rondeau, President & CEO
Family League of Baltimore

Cheryl Bost, Vice President
Maryland State Education Association

Lisa Klingenmaier and Camilla Roberson, Co-Chairs
Maryland Alliance for the Poor

Robin McKinney, Director
Maryland CASH Campaign

Barbara Dwyer Gunn, President & CEO
Seedco

Ellie Mitchell, Director
Maryland Out of School Time Network

Rev. Robert P Hahn, CEO
End Hunger in Calvert County

Benjamin Orr, Executive Director
Maryland Center on Economic Policy

George Escobar, Senior Director of Human Services
CASA

David T. Clements, Executive Director
House of David, Advocates for Fathers, Inc.

Tom Bonderenko, Executive Director
Moveable Feast

Tiffany Welch, Healthy Food and Food Justice Organizer
No Boundaries Coalition

Sarah Pitcock, CEO
National Summer Learning Association

Bill and Pam Christoffel
The Washington Hunger Group

Stephanie Archer-Smith, Executive Director
Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland

Sydney Daigle, Coordinator
Prince George's County Food Equity Council

Monica Butta and Laurie Taylor-Mitchell, Co-Chairs
Food for Thought of Baltimore County

Heather Bruskin, Manager
Montgomery County Food Council

Jackie DeCarlo, Executive Director
Manna Food Center

Liza Frye, Administrator of Head Start and Early Head Start Programs
Catholic Charities of Baltimore

Regan Vaughn, Chair
Welfare Advocates

Pam and Christian Wilson
Feeding Homeless Children Weekend Survival Kit Program