

The Maryland Cares for Kids Act

Support children in families struggling to get by on low wages by removing the school meal co-pays for 45,000 low-income students.

School breakfast and lunch support both health and learning and are effective strategies to reduce **food insecurity** — the lack of reliable access to healthy food — a condition which affects **17 percent** of all U.S. households with children (2013-2015, USDA).

Unfortunately, many low-income students don't participate in the school meal programs due to their inability to pay the reduced-price school meal **co-pays**.

Did you know that a single parent with one child who earns between \$20,826 and \$29,637 a year does not qualify for free school meals? This family meets income guidelines for **reduced-price school meals**, and therefore must pay co-pay 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.

Reduced-price eligible students often go without the food they need and/or incur cafeteria debts. In fact, reduced-price eligible students are 26 percent less likely to eat school meals, compared to students that qualify for free school meals (SY 2013-2014, MSDE).

While many interventions target high-poverty schools, this bill **directly targets the 45,000 children** who are in need, regardless of which school they attend.

Approximately \$1.5M 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.



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

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

Allegany	692	Harford	1,959
Anne Arundel	4,488	Howard	1,881
Baltimore City*	*	Kent	106
Baltimore County	7,551	Montgomery	9,236
Calvert	527	Prince George's	9,648
Caroline	399	Queen Anne's	274
Carroll	707	Somerset*	*
Cecil	892	St Mary's	714
Charles	1,417	Talbot	219
Dorchester	265	Washington	1,065
Frederick	1,672	Wicomico	677
Garrett	349	Worcester	337

>45,000 total students across the state are eligible for reduced-price school meals.

*All students in Baltimore City and Somerset County Public Schools 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 2015-2016 school year, available at <http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/School-Community-Nutrition/FreeReducedPriceMealStatistics.aspx>.