



Position Statement from the Policy Committee of the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland on Recommendations from the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

November 14, 2019

We recognize that schools are the primary avenue to ensure that low-income children have access to the healthy food they need via the

- School Breakfast Program and Maryland Meals for Achievement,
 - National School Lunch Program and Community Eligibility Provision, and
 - At-risk Afterschool Meals.
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- ✓ The Partnership supports recommendations to **expand access to Early Childhood Education** opportunities as this simultaneously expands access to the critical safety net meal programs.
 - ✓ The Partnership supports Kirwan's recommendation to **improve college and career readiness** as important strategies to **reduce poverty**.
 - ✓ The Partnership supports recommendations to **expand Community Schools** as they increase resources and support available to schools and communities. Community School Coordinators identify resources and coordinate programs such as food pantries, farmers markets, and outreach for SNAP enrollment. We will engage with newly funded schools to connect them to resources and provide technical assistance.
 - *Funding eligibility for Community Schools is currently available for schools with at least an 80% free and reduced-price rate. In addition, schools should be able to qualify using an "equivalent measure," namely, the USDA recognized equivalent measure, Identified Student Percentage (ISP) x 1.6.*
 - ✓ The Partnership supports a strong and robust **direct certification system** as an efficient and effective method for certifying all eligible students for free school meals.
 - *The Partnership encourages a new state requirement that **all categories** of eligible students be included in the direct certification system. Federal policy currently requires the use of SNAP data, however, all of the additional allowable categories should also be mandated by the state. These include TANF, migrant, homeless and foster systems.*
 - The Partnership strongly supports the inclusion of **Medicaid data** in the direct certification system.
 - ✓ The Partnership strongly supports the federal school meal funding option, **the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)**, as it is an important anti-hunger program.
 - *The Partnership encourages legislators to use state policy to encourage, not discourage schools to enroll in CEP as it increases federal funding for our schools.*
 - *The Partnership urges the legislature to include school-level poverty measures that are equivalent to the free and reduced-priced school meal rate. For example, schools should be able to use the Identified Student Percentage multiplied by 1.6, as the USDA has determined that this is equivalent to the free and reduced-price school meal rate. Allowing this measure is important for schools that participate in CEP and therefore do not collect meal benefit applications.*