

<http://tinyurl.com/healthyMD>

## **NEWS ADVISORY**

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Healthy School Food Maryland ([healthyschoolfoodmd.org](http://healthyschoolfoodmd.org)), a coalition comprised of non-profit organizations and businesses in Maryland working for real, local and healthy food for children in Maryland's school cafeterias, is gearing up for a busy legislative week in Annapolis. Beginning Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, legislators will hold hearings on seven bills the coalition believes will improve both the school food and school food environment for students across Maryland.

Healthy School Food Maryland came together during the fall of 2014 around a statewide legislative agenda on school food in response to parent frustration with unhealthy school food options, a lack of transparency about snacks sold in school and little possibility for parent input on wellness issues. Led by Lindsey Parsons, Executive Director of Real Food for Kids - Montgomery, the coalition consists of a broad array of stakeholders focused on improving our children's health. Other member organizations to the coalition include the Prince George's County Food Equity Council, Center for Science in the Public Interest, the Student Section of Maryland Public Health Association, Montgomery County Sustainability Network, Crossroads Community Food Network and Maryland Environmental Health Network.

Health School Food Maryland works collectively, leveraging its respective members, to advocate for sensible legislation to better the health and well-being of children across the state through improvements to school food. For the 2015 legislative session, Healthy School Food Maryland is working to pass the following seven pieces of legislation:

**Jane Lawton Farm-to-School Act Expansion:** Expand Maryland farm-to-school week from one week a year to two weeks a year, one week in the fall and one week in the spring.

**Sugar-Free Schools Act:** Ask each school district to write and implement a plan to reduce sugar loads for all school-provided foods to within limits recommended by the American Heart Association.

**Thirsty Kids Act:** Offer free, unlimited water to children in school cafeterias by using reusable water bottles and offering cups.

**Chemical-Free School Food Act:** Prohibit chemicals in school food that have been shown to be carcinogenic in animal studies or associated with hyperactivity and/or other behavioral and health problems in children.

**Vending Machines and Marketing Act:** Require all school vending machines at all hours to be compliant with local and state guidelines for food and drinks sold during the school day in vending machines and limit marketing to only compliant foods and beverages.

School Food Transparency Act: Improve transparency of foods served in schools by providing parents with a list of a la carte, breakfast, and lunch menu items. Require menus to be posted on the school's website, including ingredient lists and nutritional information for all foods sold.

School Wellness Committee Act: Establish standing wellness committees in each school district with parent and community representation.

A petition supporting these bills has garnered over 700 signatures from around Maryland. To read the petition, go to: <http://petitions.moveon.org/sign/bring-healthier-food>

Organizations supportive of Healthy School Food Maryland's agenda are encouraged to e-mail [info@healthyschoolfoodmd.org](mailto:info@healthyschoolfoodmd.org) to be added to the team. Citizens are encouraged to contact their legislators in support of the legislation.