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BILL: House Bill 273  
TITLE: Summer Meals Expansion Grant Program - Established  
DATE: February 9, 2017  
POSITION: SUPPORT  
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means  
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House Bill 273 establishes the Summer Meals Expansion Grant Program; providing the purpose of the program is to provide funds to sponsors to increase the number of children and the number of meals served through the Summer Food Service Program; requiring the State Department of Education to administer the Program; authorizing specified uses of funds in the Program; requiring a sponsor that has received a specified grant in a specified year to continue to receive the grant subject to specified conditions.

Local superintendents place a top priority on programs that improve the health and well-being of students by providing nutritious meals. More than 400,000 Maryland children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals, but may not have access to nutritious meals during the summer when schools are closed. For these families, feeding their children during the summer months can be a serious health problem. Federal funds are available to assist public and private nonprofit organizations in serving free, nutritious meals through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The SFSP plays a vital role in reducing childhood hunger along with providing healthful meals. However, more communities need to become involved in providing a meal service so that more children have access to healthy meals during the summer.

House Bill 273 establishes the Summer Meals Expansion Grant Program, which is a competitive grant program to provide funds to sponsors to increase the number of children and the number of meals served through SFSP. This grant program to sponsors would greatly help expand access and increase participation in the summer meals program by establishing additional sites or expanding existing sites, transporting children to sites, and creating outreach and marketing programs to inform families about the Summer Meals Program.

For the reasons detailed above, PSSAM **SUPPORTS** House Bill 273.