



**Prince George's County Board of Education**  
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**From the Desk of The Honorable K. Alexander Wallace, Board Member, Seventh District**

**October 22, 2020**

**A Statement Regarding the Final Passage of  
Board Policy 5210 - Prohibition of Systemic Meal Shaming Practices**

About a year and a half ago, I was visiting a school in District 7 to introduce myself to its new principal. About ten minutes into our meeting, an urgent knock could be heard on the door. It was the Principal's Secretary and a third grade student in need of just \$0.80 to close the financial gap needed to buy a hot meal for lunch. The principal stopped our conversation, reached into her purse and grabbed three quarters and a nickel - just so that one child could not feel the shame and embarrassment that so many other students have had to feel in our cafeterias. It was right then I decided that enough was enough; that we should not place the responsibility of meal account balances onto children or hope that our employees would be kind enough or financially able to support students who have a meal debt.

After researching best practices and policies from other school systems, I authored Board Policy 5210 and introduced it in the fall of 2019 to the Board of Education. Hours later, my inbox was flooded with emails from students, parents, staff members, and alumni with one common theme: "This happened to me, too". While these messages were reassuring that this policy would be meaningful and impactful, I knew it had to be thoroughly vetted by the full board.

Last night, after that thorough vetting process, the Board unanimously adopted Board Policy 5210 and, in doing so, subscribed our school system to the belief that a student's hunger is just as big of a barrier to academic excellence as is the absence of any other required educational supply and that a student's empty stomach is just as dangerous to their success in school, and society, as is an empty mind and that we all must provide the necessary support to nourish both.

Board Policy 5210 outlines the Board of Education's obligation to make healthy food and beverage choices available to all students and has three key pillars: (1) prohibits the act of meal shaming during all meal-related interactions that involve students through administrative professional development and fiscal allocation; (2) empowers the Chief Executive Officer with the ability to develop a Universal Meals Program for all elementary students; and (3) establishes a dedicated funding account to accept charitable stakeholder giving for the purpose of addressing communal food insecurity for our school system's students through the Excellence in Education Foundation, the charitable arm of the Prince George's County Public Schools.

Signed, with thanks to all involved,

**K. Alexander Wallace**  
Board Member, Seventh District

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*To provide a great education that empowers all students and contributes to thriving communities.*  
**Prince George's County Public Schools**