

# Direct Certification for Federal School Meal Benefits in Maryland



Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education

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# Free and Reduced Price Meals – Definition and Eligibility

Federal programs provide healthy food to income eligible children through either a Direct Certification process or Meal Eligibility Forms. Children are directly certified if they are:

- Children from families receiving federal and State assistance programs – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- Children who are in foster care, migrants, runaways, homeless
- Children who participate in Head Start

Children from families with qualifying household income - annual income of \$46,435 for a family of four in SY 2018-19

# Free and Reduced Price Meals – Community Eligibility Provision

- The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows districts or schools with at least 40% of qualifying students to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students without collecting household applications for all students.
- CEP eliminates individual student eligibility determination, which lowers the administrative burden on eligible schools and districts, but also eliminates student-level identification.

# Free and Reduced Price Meals – Community Eligibility Provision

In Maryland, all schools in 3 school systems participate in CEP, and another 48 schools in 9 school systems participate in CEP.

CEP School Systems	Systems with CEP Schools
Baltimore City (170)	Allegany (4)
Dorchester County (12)	Baltimore County (4)
Somerset County (9)	Cecil County (4)
	Frederick County (3)
	Garrett County (1)
	Howard County (2)
	Prince George’s County (11)
	Washington County (11)
	Wicomico County (8)

# Free and Reduced Price Meals – Direct Certification

## Current Process in Maryland

- The Department of Human Services (DHS) provides SNAP, TANF, and Foster Care data to MSDE. MSDE parses the data by county and provides it to local school systems.
- Local School Systems match the DHS data with their student records using a number of elements – name, date of birth, gender, street address
- Local School Systems directly certify migrant, homeless and Head Start students.
- **Match Rates** vary across districts due to data quality and matching processes; 100% matches are directly certified. Near matches require further investigation to determine eligibility.

# Free and Reduced Price Meals – Direct Certification

## Moving Forward in Maryland

- Matching of student records against assistance program records will be conducted at the State level using a highly regarded process that has had success in other states.
- State-level matching will provide a more consistent, efficient process that is expected to improve the match rates across districts; LEAs will still investigate “near matches”.

# Defining Economic Disadvantage for Accountability

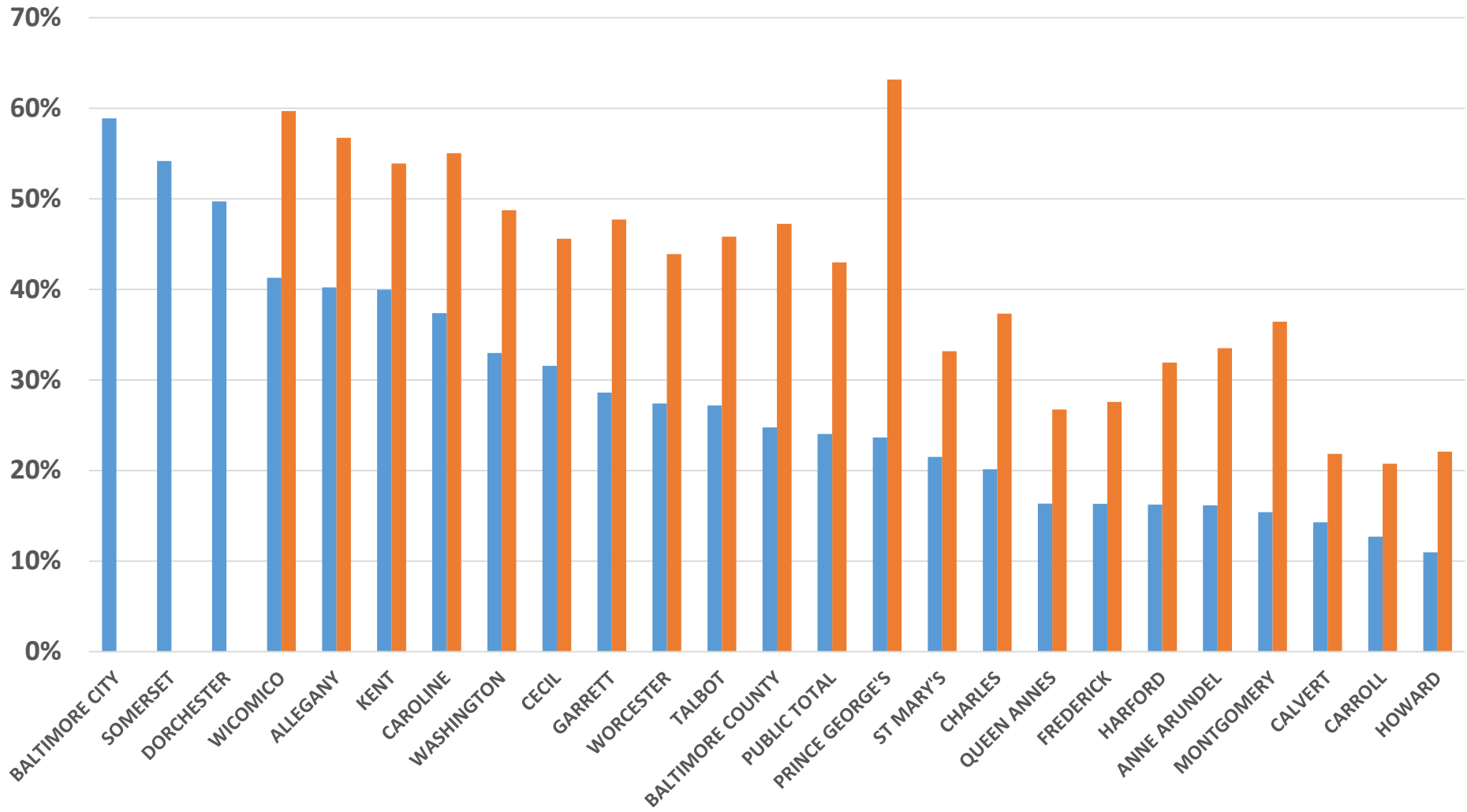
- The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to define an “**economically disadvantaged**” student group in a way that is:
  - Student-level
  - Uniform across all schools and school systems
  - Accurate
  - Verifiable
  - Less administratively burdensome
  - Not an impact on funding

# Defining Economic Disadvantage for Accountability

- In May, the Maryland State Board of Education determined that students will be defined as “economically disadvantaged” for accountability based on Direct Certification, as approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the State of Maryland.
- Examples of how other States are defining economic disadvantage for accountability:
  - Delaware, Louisiana, Massachusetts, and Tennessee, plus the District of Columbia, use direct certification.
  - Hawaii and Oklahoma require an annual collection of income forms for all students.
  - Alaska and Iowa will use an income eligibility form for non-direct-certified students.



# 2017 Direct Certification and FARMs, by Local School System



NOTE: 2017 FARMs data are not reported for systems in which all schools participate in CEP

■ 2017 Direct Certification ■ 2017 FARMs