

SB 35 - Maryland Food Bank - SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Anne Wallerstedt

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 35
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
January 17, 2024

Position: SUPPORT

Senate Bill 35 expands the state supplement of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by increasing the minimum household benefit amount and removing any age eligibility on receiving this increase.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that 1 in 3 Marylanders is at risk of food insecurity. A person who is food insecure does not have consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day, and this problem persists in every area of the state. There are also communities and populations that are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, including communities of color, families with children, and older adults. The drivers of food insecurity are complex and often include additional factors such as low income, lack of reliable transportation, and access to healthcare.

SNAP benefits are federally funding based on household size and income eligibility and administered by the Maryland Department of Human Services. States however may provide additional funding at its discretion, and Maryland has chosen to do so to support those Marylanders who are most in need of financial assistance to feed themselves and their families. The additional benefits that SB 35 will provide to Marylanders struggling with food insecurity would be immediate and noticeable. More than 72% of Maryland families who receive SNAP benefits report facing financial difficulties. Financial instability is a major driver of food insecurity, so any additional assistance to household budgets is clearly needed. Communities and their resources may likely also benefit, as there will be increased spending power with SNAP benefits and the potential of additional funds for other areas of household spending.

Additionally, and most foundationally, food assistance benefits such as SNAP are a simple and proven effective method of combatting hunger and supporting food-insecure communities. The Maryland Food Bank knows that the demand for charitable food is often related to public benefits such as SNAP; for example, 95% of our partners saw an immediate increase in demand following the expiration of the SNAP emergency allotments in March 2023, and internet searches for terms such as “free food” were higher in the summer of 2023 than the summer of 2022 and have culminated in an average of 18% increase month over month since September 2023. Bolstering the food system by ensuring SNAP benefits are adequate and robust is a necessary tool in order to eradicate hunger for good in our state.

For these reasons, the Maryland Food Bank respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 35.

SB0035.pdf

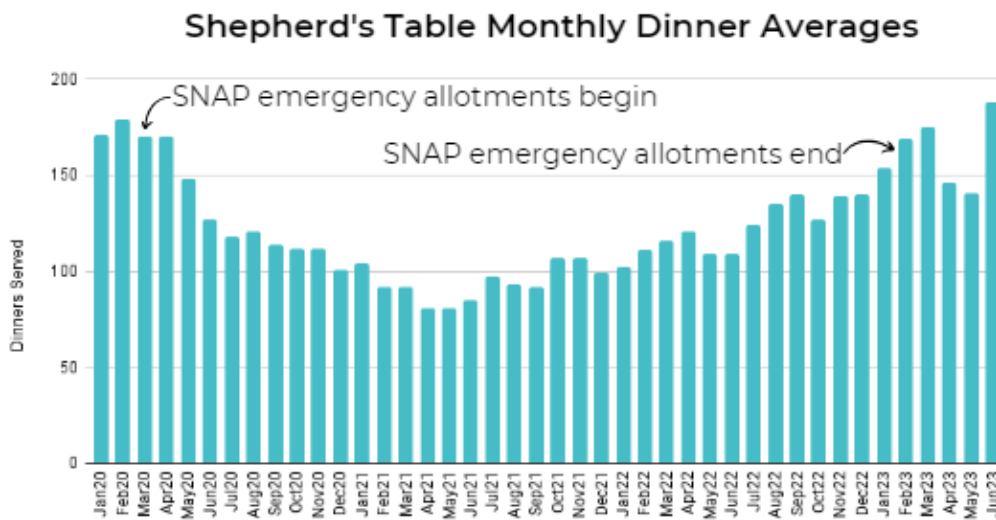
Uploaded by: Brenna Olson

Position: FAV

January 16, 2024

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

Shepherd's Table is a social services organization in Silver Spring that has provided hot, nutritious, free meals to the unhoused and low-income community since 1983. In 2023, we served a record number of meals compared to recent years and saw a noticeable increase in people seeking services at the end of the emergency allotment period.



Source: Shepherd's Table 2023

For many of our meal guests, SNAP was the only income they were receiving while trying to find work and housing. It also our meal gives guests more choices and the ability to get culturally competent food. While Shepherd's Table serves a wide range of cuisines, not everyone's preference can be met when serving over 150 individuals multiple times a day, and everyone deserves dignity and discretion in what food they choose to feed themselves and their families.

The recent changes in SNAP regulations have significantly impacted households and individuals, creating challenges not only for SNAP beneficiaries but also affecting the broader food system. Maryland Market Money increases the buying power of those using nutrition assistance benefits, but when the buying power is reduced for participants, this results in farmers having reduced sales, therefore taking away the incentive for farmers to continue to accept SNAP benefits. The loss of emergency allotments resulted in a considerable reduction in federal dollars entering Maryland, impacting our local economy by an estimated \$105 million each month and over \$1 billion annually. **For these reasons, Shepherd's Table supports SB 0035 to increase the minimum SNAP benefit.**

By enacting Senate Bill 0035, Maryland can demonstrate its commitment to addressing food insecurity and supporting a proven program that helps lift families out of poverty.



In conclusion, I respectfully urge your favorable consideration for SB 0035. Thank you for your time and dedication to addressing our state's critical issue of food insecurity.

Best,

Brenna Olson

Advocacy Coordinator

Shepherd's Table

SB0035 - FAV - Capital Area Food Bank.pdf

Uploaded by: Brian Alexander

Position: FAV

Capital Area Food Bank
Brian Alexander, Sr. Manager of Advocacy and Public Policy
Testimony in SUPPORT of SB0035
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
January 17, 2024

Dear Chairman Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

My name is Brian Alexander, and I am the Senior Manager of Advocacy and Public Policy at the Capital Area Food Bank. On behalf of the Capital Area Food Bank, I write to offer support for SB0035 – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement.

The Capital Area Food Bank has been a leader in the Washington, D.C. area’s hunger relief community for more than 44 years, serving residents of Northern Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties in Maryland. During our last fiscal year, we distributed nearly 29 million meals in those two Maryland counties alone through a vast network of partners and programs to help our neighbors keep food on their tables.

The pandemic continues to greatly impact our community, and the end of pandemic-era waivers and flexibilities for programs like SNAP have hit our clients particularly hard. The SNAP Emergency Allotments that were administered during the public health emergency provided a meaningful boost to all SNAP recipients, allowing families to continue to access food at local retailers amidst inflation and supply chain constraints.

Each year, the Capital Area Food Bank releases a Hunger Report – a comprehensive look at food insecurity across the food bank’s service area. When we surveyed SNAP recipients about the impact of the temporary boost to their benefits, more than 70% said that the increase had a major, positive impact on their household’s financial situation.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, when those waivers ended in March of last year, more than 75% of surveyed SNAP recipients indicated that it caused a major negative impact on their finances. More than 40% of respondents coped by seeking out free groceries while roughly one-third skipped or cut the size of their meals.

In an effort to respond to the loss of these waivers and flexibilities, some states have taken steps to utilize local funding to supplement minimum federal benefits. For example, New Jersey recently raised the minimum benefit floor for households to \$50/month in 2021 and \$95/month in 2023, ensuring all recipients have a minimum level of buying power to keep food on the table.

Given Maryland’s high cost of living, enacting this legislation would go a long way towards reducing food insecurity in the state and would allow recipients to focus additional financial resources on other basic needs. SNAP is a proven, effective program, and this legislation offers

the state an opportunity to tailor benefits to the demonstrated needs of residents and lift more Marylanders out of poverty.

In conclusion, we urge a favorable report for SB0035. Thank you for your time.

Testimony for SB 35 SenMcCray .pdf

Uploaded by: Destiny Bell

Position: FAV

CORY V. McCRAY
Legislative District 45
Baltimore City

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Health and Human Services

Vice Chair, Capital Budget

Executive Nominations Committee

Legislative Policy Committee

Joint Committee on Gaming Oversight



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Vote Yes on Senate Bill 35

Bill Title: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement
Hearing Date: January 17, 2024, Budget and Taxation

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to request your support for Senate Bill 35 (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement). The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides benefits through Electronic Benefits Transfer or EBT cards to low-income individuals and families to buy groceries and healthy food options. Research shows individuals who receive SNAP fall into three categories: low-paid working families, older adults with low incomes, and people with disabilities living on fixed incomes.¹

SNAP benefits are critical for individuals who often deal with food insecurity. Food insecurity is an issue that affects millions of people in this country and across the state. The definition of food insecurity is when an individual or group needs more to eat and is unsure of where the next meal or food is coming from. SNAP has been identified as one of the ways to address the issue of food insecurity. Individuals and families who benefit from the SNAP program receive \$40 per month from the state. Senate Bill 35 would increase this amount to at least \$95 a month per individual and remove the minimum eligibility age for a person to receive SNAP benefits. Research links food security to economic well-being and cites inflation and rising food costs as the factors impacting food insecurity.² High living costs, expensive housing, unemployment, and low-wage jobs are identified as the root causes of food insecurity.

A recent report published by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found a link between SNAP, improved health outcomes, and lower healthcare costs among program recipients. Research shows without food assistance programs such as SNAP, food insecurity would increase the risk of certain health-related illnesses – making it difficult for an individual to manage their condition. SNAP places additional money in the consumer's pocket, allowing them to purchase healthier food choices. This can ultimately lower the chance of the onset of certain health

¹ <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/12-14-22fa.pdf>

² <https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/ElevatingVoicesExec.pdf>

conditions like diabetes and obesity. Both can be linked to poor food choices an individual might consider due to budget constraints.

Therefore, as the study shows, policies that expand program eligibility and increase SNAP benefits would further improve health and reduce healthcare costs, while policies that limit eligibility and cut benefits would harm health and raise healthcare costs.³

For these reasons, I hope you will consider the population that would desperately benefit from this program to ensure they are not forgotten and support Senate Bill 35.

Respectfully,



Cory V. McCray
45th District

³ <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/12-14-22fa.pdf>

MD Catholic Conference_SB 35_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

January 17, 2024

SB 35

Property Tax - Credit for Dwelling House of Disabled Veterans – Alterations

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 35. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 35 would provide a state-subsidized increase to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to \$95 per month for individuals who receive less than that amount. This legislation also removes the requirement that individuals be at least 62 years of age in order to receive the state-funded supplemental increase.

The Church strongly supports the continuation of anti-poverty programs that address the basic needs of its poorest individuals and families, including those tackling food insecurity, affordable housing, and unemployment. In 2021, Pope Francis stressed in his message on World Food Day that, *“Our actions are our future. Better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life”*, *underlines the need for concerted action to ensure that everyone has access to diets that ensure maximum environmental sustainability, and that are both adequate and affordable. Each of us has a role to play in transforming food systems for the benefit of people and the planet, and “all of us can cooperate [...] for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents” (Encyclical Laudato Si’, 14).*

In Maryland, the Conference advocates for the protection of social safety net programs to promote the common good. Household and familial insecurity stemming from the instability and fluctuation of federal assistance programs is detrimental to a healthy society. When there is doubt as to where a next meal will come from, it is extremely difficult to focus on things such as the dignity of work or care for one's family. Senate Bill 35 would serve as a means to provide continuing stability and dignity for those who cannot financially withstand losing such an important benefit as food assistance. Thus, it is for these reasons that the Conference respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 35.

2024 SB0035 Favorable Written Testimony SMADC.pdf

Uploaded by: Heather Hulse

Position: FAV



info@marylandmarketmoney.org
www.marylandmarketmoney.org

**Testimony in Support of SB0035
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
January 16, 2024**

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

My name is Heather Hulsey. I am the Program Manager for Food Access Programs of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) and of the Maryland Market Money (MMM) program, a statewide food access program of SMADC and the Maryland Department of Agriculture that feeds Marylanders and supports farmers. MMM removes economic barriers for Marylanders experiencing food insecurity, providing a dollar-for-dollar match for purchases made using federal nutrition benefits *including* SNAP at participating Maryland farmers markets, farm stands, and CSAs while providing technical assistance, training, marketing, and additional services to stakeholders. Maryland Market Money and SMADC strongly support Senate Bill 0035 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement.

The loss of SNAP waivers and flexibilities that provided greater access to households to apply and maintain benefits, as well as the loss of pandemic-era SNAP Emergency Allotments in March 2023 greatly affected the Marylanders we serve. With the federal SNAP minimum falling to \$23 a month, we saw fear and desperation from our Maryland Market Money program participants. First, we saw fewer shoppers willing to spend their SNAP dollars with local farmers and at farmers markets where food options are often fresher and healthier and opting to shop at the reduced cost grocers and dollar stores for less fresh food options in an attempt to stretch their meager food budgets.

One example of the desperation we saw was in response to a bulk marketing mailing where we partner with Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS), the agency administering SNAP in Maryland. Every summer, our program prints a small MMM marketing piece to include with DHS's SNAP Redetermination Letters and Maryland Benefits Review Letters going to benefits recipients statewide letting them know of the

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
is a division of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
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www.marylandmarketmoney.org

opportunity to have their federal nutrition benefits matched at participating farmers markets and direct marketing farms.

Each year we usually receive a few telephone calls from potential program participants wanting to learn more about our offerings and participating locations. This year, the volume of calls and the tone of the conversations was noticeably different than any year prior. The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland's phone lines rang incessantly day and night. Our voicemail boxes were full every day with new callers. When they filled our voicemail boxes, they chose other extensions unrelated to our program desperate to get a voice on the other end. This went on for months as our mailing continued. We could not keep up. We had countless messages and conversations from benefits recipients asking why their SNAP benefits were now so low and telling us they had no idea how they were going to afford food for their families. There were so many calls even asking about the DHS letters themselves because DHS's SNAP customer service phone lines were so flooded with their own volume of desperate Marylanders. We helped as best we could, listening to each caller's heartbreaking testimony, and told people about our program's benefit matching dollars and additionally, any other food resource information we could provide. For their benefits questions, we tried to refer them to local offices in their county instead of the state customer service line which they could not get through. These were all very hard conversations with folks who didn't know what their future would hold and how they would afford meals for themselves and their families. In a country of wealth and abundance like the United States or even the beautiful state of Maryland, no one should be experiencing food insecurity like this. Between lower benefit amounts, food cost inflation, and wages that are still too low for many to keep up with the cost of living, the level of pandemic-era food insecurity has not gone away.

If the federal government is unwilling to provide sufficient funding to Americans experiencing food insecurity, then it's Maryland's duty to fill in the gap for our residents. Let's stay on track with our Governor's promise of "no one left behind." We owe Marylanders that and this legislation could be an important piece of that puzzle as it has been in other states.

In conclusion, we urge for your vote in favor of SB 0035. Thank you for your time.

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
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SB0035 - FAV - FEC - Final.pdf

Uploaded by: Heaven Jordan

Position: FAV



Witness in FAVOR of SB0035
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
January 17, 2024

Prince George's County Food Equity Council
1401 Mercantile Lane Suite #481
Largo, MD 20774

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

I am writing to express our support for Senate Bill 0035 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement. As staff and members of the Prince George's County Food Equity Council, a local food policy council that helps residents, grow, sell, and choose healthy foods in Prince George's County, MD, we strongly believe in the importance of improving participation in federal nutrition programs and ending hunger in our community.

The recent changes in SNAP regulations have had a significant impact on households and individuals, creating challenges not only for SNAP beneficiaries but also affecting the broader food system. While Maryland Market Money increases the buying power of those using nutrition assistance benefits, participants' funding constraints result in reduced vendor sales for our growers and producers who accept SNAP benefits. The loss of emergency allotments resulted in a considerable reduction in federal dollars entering Maryland, impacting our local economy by an estimated \$105 million each month and over \$1 billion annually.

Our organization has observed the repercussions of these changes firsthand. We've received messages from families struggling to navigate the sudden shift in benefits and heard from local food pantries that their client numbers have skyrocketed. Many residents depend on food banks and pantries to feed their families and/or use credit cards to buy groceries, digging themselves deeper into debt. These challenges, combined with inflation and rising grocery prices, have exacerbated the situation.

Drawing from the experiences of other states grappling with similar issues, we believe it is crucial for Maryland to take action. With Congress unable to pass a Farm Bill in 2022, other states have begun taking action to help remedy this hunger cliff. Massachusetts, immediately following the loss of emergency allotments, provided households with 40% of their maximum allotment for 3 months. The District of Columbia recently passed and funded Give SNAP A Raise, which will increase each SNAP household's monthly benefit by 10%. New Jersey increased the minimum benefit for households to \$50 in 2021 and further increased it to \$95 a month in 2023. Maryland can and should join other states in addressing SNAP benefit adequacy



by boosting the minimum benefit. By enacting Senate Bill 0035, Maryland can demonstrate its commitment to addressing food insecurity and supporting a proven program that helps lift families out of poverty.

In conclusion, we respectfully urge your favorable consideration for SB 0035. Thank you for your time and dedication to addressing the critical issue of food insecurity in our state.

Sincerely,

Heaven Jordan

Heaven Jordan
Prince George's County Food Equity Council

SB 35 - B&T - Jan 17 - Support --- Supplemental N

Uploaded by: Henry Bogdan

Position: FAV

January 17, 2024

Testimony on Senate Bill 35
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

Position: Favorable

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of more than 1500 nonprofit organizations and institutions. We are asking you to again support Senate Bill 35 to provide critically needed assistance to low income families and seniors.

The termination last year of federal emergency allotments impacted households and individuals on SNAP, as well as but the entire food system in the state. As Maryland Hunger Solutions has reported, federal nutrition assistance dollars coming into Maryland **each month** for SNAP dropped nearly \$70 million with the ending of emergency allotments. It is estimated for every \$1 provided through SNAP, \$1.50 is generated in the local economy. These estimates would calculate a loss of \$105 million in the economy every month and over \$1 billion annually.

But the seriousness of these reductions is even more dramatic at the recipient's level, where the lowest minimum monthly allotment (for a 'household' of one) dropped from \$281 to as little as \$23.

We urge you to give a favorable report.

SB35 Final in PDF.pdf

Uploaded by: James Campbell

Position: FAV

From: **Kalla, Karen (VOL)** kkalla@aarp.org
Subject: SB35 Final in PDF
Date: January 16, 2024 at 11:22 AM
To: Jim Campbell jimcampbell222@comcast.net, Bresnahan, Tammy TBresnahan@aarp.org

KK

Hi Jim,
You may have already done this, but here is your bill in PDF format ready for submission.
Thank you!!!
Karen



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**SB35 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement
FAVORABLE
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Wednesday, January 17, 2024**

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of Budget and Taxation Committee. My name is Jim Campbell, immediate past president of AARP Maryland and former member of the Maryland House of Delegates. I am here to offer AARP's support of SB 35 introduced by Senator Cory McCray.

Senate Bill 35 expands eligibility for State-provided supplemental benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). It repeals the minimum age a household member must be to receive this benefit and increases the amount of the supplemental benefits that the State must provide from \$40 to \$95.

Maryland Hunger Solution has reported more than 600,000 Marylanders live in poverty. The Food and Research Action Center (FRAC) noted the state has the nation's 7th highest food insecurity rate among seniors.

Last February, according to the Center on Budget and Priorities, SNAP recipients suffered reductions in benefits due to the end of pandemic-related benefits. These benefits previously reduced food insecurity which had reached a two-decade low for families with children. As a result of the cut in the pandemic-related benefits, SNAP households received on average \$95 less per month – though many households suffered even greater losses.

SB 35 will support older citizens who are dealing with inflation, higher utility bills, and especially the increase in food costs. Poor nutrition can lead to health deficiencies and complications for many seniors. We encourage a favorable report on this bill which can help reduce food insecurity and ensure that older citizens have access to healthy and nutritious food.

For these reasons, AARP requests a favorable vote on SB35 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement. If you have questions or would like follow-up information, please contact Tammy Bresnahan at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410.302.8451.



SB0035 - FAV - MD Hunger Solutions.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: JD Robinson

Position: FAV



Testimony in Support of SB0035
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
January 17, 2024

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

My name is JD Robinson. I am the Program Coordinator for SNAP of Maryland Hunger Solutions, a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to end hunger in Maryland by improving participation in the federal nutrition programs. Maryland Hunger Solutions strongly supports Senate Bill 0035 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement, to increase the minimum SNAP benefit in Maryland to \$95 a month.

Last year, SNAP lost a multitude of waivers and flexibilities that provided greater access to households to apply and maintain benefits, as well as a maximization to monthly benefit amounts through Emergency Allotments. This waiver provided an increased benefit corresponding to household size for all eligible SNAP families and individuals. Under this waiver, a household of one saw no less than \$281 a month and a household of four no less than \$973 a month. This ended in March 2023, with all households seeing a decrease in their monthly allotments with some falling to as little as \$23 a month, the federal minimum.

The loss of emergency allotments not only affects households and individuals on SNAP, but the entire food system in the state. The amount of federal dollars coming into Maryland each month for SNAP dropped nearly \$70 million with the ending of emergency allotments. It is estimated for every \$1 provided through SNAP, \$1.50 is generated in the local economy. These estimates would calculate a loss of \$105 million in the economy every month and over \$1 billion annually.

Our on-the-ground experience as an authorized SNAP outreach agency for the state of Maryland has given us a unique perspective on this issue. We have fielded multiple calls on our toll-free hotline from families in distress as they attempted to navigate this sudden change. Older adults have said they are unable to support their doctor-recommended diets due to losing the extra benefits. More families have started to return to food pantries and slowly becoming overdue on utility and rent payments. All of this coinciding with inflation and record-high prices at the grocery store which has led us to a "hunger cliff."

With Congress unable to pass a Farm Bill in 2023, states have begun taking action to help remedy this hunger cliff. The District of Columbia recently passed and funded Give SNAP A Raise, which will increase each SNAP household's monthly benefit by 10%. New Jersey increased the minimum benefit for households to \$50 in 2021 and further increased it to \$95 a



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

month in 2023. Maryland can and should join other states in addressing SNAP benefit adequacy by boosting the minimum benefit.

Enacting this legislation shows a commitment from the state to provide for those impacted most by food insecurity and supplement a proven program that can lift families out of poverty.

In conclusion, we urge a favorable report for SB 0035. Thank you for your time.

SB 35_MDCEP_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Kali Schumitz

Position: FAV

Increasing SNAP benefits would provide relief to struggling Marylanders

Position Statement Supporting Senate Bill 35

Given before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

With the end of additional federal support to combat heightened food insecurity resulting from the pandemic, increasing the minimum monthly amount for Maryland's supplemental benefit under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to a minimum of \$95 per month and eliminating the minimum age for that benefit would have a lasting impact on the lives of many struggling Marylanders. This would help promote economic security for low-income Marylanders struggling to keep food on the table as they face higher costs of food and inflation. For these reasons, **the Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports Senate Bill 35.**

The reality is that Maryland households continue to struggle to put food on the table. Latest available data for the month of October 2023 show that over 366,000 Maryland households were participating in SNAP, a potential increase of 4.5% from October 2022.ⁱ This roughly translates into over 682,000 Marylanders who were able to access more nutritious food because of SNAP during October 2023. The hunger that Marylanders are experiencing is further supported from the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey which shows that between October 18 and October 30, 2023, over 445,000 Marylanders reported experiencing food insecurity at least sometimes.ⁱⁱ

The price of food has risen at rates that have not been seen before in recent history. Reports show that average annual food prices rose by 3.5% between 2019 and 2020. To put this figure in context, over the last 20 years the level of retail food price inflation has been 2% per year.ⁱⁱⁱ While these numbers can be attributed, in part, to the supply-chain issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the issue of higher food costs has not disappeared. Increasing the minimum supplemental benefit and extending it to reach more people is necessary to account for these rapid changes, so that Marylanders can put food on the table and meet their nutritional needs.

Ensuring that families can afford to purchase enough groceries allows adults to continue working and helps children focus on learning rather than being hungry in school. By raising the minimum monthly supplemental benefit to \$95, the state will be able to foster healthier communities and boost the economy.

In addition to the immediate relief SNAP provides in the form of food assistance, evidence shows it also makes long-term improvements in the lives of individuals and families. Research shows that SNAP reduces food insecurity and poverty, leading to improved health and economic outcomes as a result. This is especially true for those who receive SNAP as children. Studies show that adults who participate in SNAP have fewer sick days, fewer medical visits, and are less likely to exhibit psychological distress. Additionally, children with access to SNAP

benefits were less likely to have heart disease, stunted growth, or be obese.^{iv} Marylanders who receive food assistance are therefore more likely to be able to support themselves, which is also good for the state's economy.

Senate Bill 35 is an important step in helping more low-income families afford to get enough to eat. SNAP has proven to be successful in creating more economic security for these families in need and can continue to be effective by making these changes to the supplemental benefit.

For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully requests that the Budget and Taxation Committee give a favorable report to Senate Bill 35.

Equity Impact Analysis: Senate Bill 35

Bill summary

Senate Bill 35 raises the minimum monthly amount for Maryland's supplemental benefit under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program from \$40 to \$95 and repeals the minimum age to be eligible for these benefits.

Background

During the pandemic those who received SNAP were given the maximized allotment for their household size. Now that the public health emergency has come to an end, over 347,000 Maryland households have seen a reduction in their SNAP amounts despite experiencing continued hardship.^v Many families are left in a position where they no longer have the financial resources to meet their nutritional needs. In fact, SNAP households in Maryland collectively lost \$69 million in federal food benefits per month. The biggest difference was seen among older adults. The average monthly benefit per person between December 2022 and February 2023 was \$281 in Maryland, later decreasing to \$162 shortly after the end of the emergency allotments. This decrease of about 42% makes a significant difference for people trying to stretch their dollars^{vi}.

Equity Implications

Policies in the past have led to a system of unequal opportunities for marginalized groups within Maryland. Although the most obvious racially discriminatory policies have long been overturned or mitigated, the impact of these policies continue to persist in both society and public policy and have led to significant racial and health disparities. People of color experience much higher rates of economic insecurity and poverty and are more likely to use SNAP to afford enough to eat.

Research shows that increasing economic security for households through programs like SNAP can help reduce overall poverty, child poverty, and racial and ethnic inequities. This is especially true in Maryland as 59% of all adult SNAP recipients were Black in state fiscal year 2022. Increasing the minimum monthly supplemental SNAP benefit and eliminating the age requirement will enable this program to have a greater impact and reach more of those in need. Meeting this need strengthens our economy and can dismantle the economic barriers that too often hold back Marylanders of color.

Impact

Senate Bill 35 would likely **improve racial and economic equity** in Maryland.

ⁱ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Latest Available Month-October 2023 State Level Participation & Benefits, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

ⁱⁱ Household Pulse Survey, Week 63, Food Sufficiency and Food Insecurity Table 1, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2023/demo/hhp/hhp63.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ “Food Prices and Spending,” The United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 2021, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/food-prices-and-spending/?topicId=1afac93a-444e-4e05-99f3-53217721a8b>

^{iv} “Chart Book: SNAP Helps Struggling Families Put Food on the Table,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2019, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/chart-book-snap-helps-struggling-families-put-food-on-the-table#part4>

^v Food Research & Action Center, “Hunger Cliff 2023: Maryland,” https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/SNAP_FRAC_FactSheets_Maryland.pdf

^{vi} Hall, Lauren. (2023, September 21). End of SNAP’s temporary emergency allotments resulted in substantial benefit cut. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/end-of-snaps-temporary-emergency-allotments-resulted-in-substantial-benefit-cut>

SB 35 - SNAP State Supplement.pdf

Uploaded by: Ken Phelps Jr

Position: FAV



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE
OF MARYLAND

The Maryland Episcopal
Public Policy
Network

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 35
FAVORABLE**

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—
State Supplement**

**TO: Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair, Senator Jim Rosapepe, Vice Chair, and
members of the Budget and Taxation Committee;**

FROM: Rev. Linda K. Boyd, Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

DATE: January 17, 2024:

.
The Episcopal Church at large and the Diocese of Maryland, like the major faith traditions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, are based upon the concept of loving your neighbor as yourself. Making sure that impoverished families have nutritious food to eat is certainly part of that concept.

Research shows that SNAP makes it easier for families to afford nutritious food without having to sacrifice health care or other basic needs. SNAP boosts an individual's health; helps children perform better in school; helps to lift families out of poverty; and helps them to stay out of poverty.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a favorable report on SB 35.

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Support AHA SB 35 SNAP Expansion.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Hale

Position: FAV



January 16, 2024

Testimony of Laura Hale
American Heart Association
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the committee today. My name is Laura Hale and I am the Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association. The American Heart Association extends its support for Senate Bill 35 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement.

Access to nutritious healthy food is essential for long term heart health. Unfortunately, too many Marylanders do not have access to healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, living in food deserts. In these food deserts many Marylanders rely on convenience stores which primarily sell high salt food with low nutritional value. It is difficult, if not an impossible for these Marylanders to regularly get to a supermarket and have healthy foods. As such, Marylanders living in these areas suffer from higher rates of obesity and cardiovascular disease.

Increasing the amount of money each SNAP recipient receives creates the opportunity for more healthy choices and to make sure that families in Maryland are fed.

Funding SNAP is essential for Maryland families and the Heart Association urges a favorable report on SB 35.

SB35 - FAV - Crossroads Community Food Network.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Goldberg

Position: FAV

**Testimony in Support of SB0035
Omar Marroquin, Crossroads Community Food Network
January 17, 2024**

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

My name is Omar Marroquin, and I'm the Farmers Market Program Manager at Crossroads Community Food Network in Takoma Park. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 35 - SNAP State Supplement.

The State Supplement would raise the minimum to \$95 per month. SNAP generates business for food retailers of all types and sizes, and for the past 17 years it's used at farmers markets like Crossroads Farmers Market. We support this bill because it will help reduce food insecurity among SNAP-users in our community and support the local farmers and vendors in our network.

SNAP redemption at farmers markets has increased dramatically over the past 17 years. This is largely due to the rise of incentive programs that match SNAP dollars spent at farmers markets. This kind of "double-dollar" program, now at hundreds of markets across the country, started right here in Maryland at Crossroads Farmers Market. It was founded in 2007 to bring fresh fruits and vegetables to the Takoma/Langley Crossroads, a primarily immigrant community that straddles the line between Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. It was the first farmers market in Maryland to accept SNAP benefits and the first in the country to match them dollar for dollar. At CFM, shoppers who use SNAP can now receive up to \$50 each week in incentives, called Fresh Checks, to spend with the 22+ small local farmers and vendors on more fresh fruits and vegetables.

The Fresh Checks program at Crossroads Farmers Market is founded on a simple idea: make fresh fruits and vegetables more affordable, and people will buy them. When the market first started, it was a radical experiment; nobody knew if it would work. But the program has grown significantly: in 2007, about \$7,000 in Fresh Checks was distributed to 100 community members; last year, almost 2,000 people received more than \$90,000 in Fresh Checks, matching what they spent using SNAP, WIC, and other federal nutrition benefits. Over the last 17 seasons, nearly 25,000 individuals, families, and seniors spent over \$970,000 in federal nutrition benefits at Crossroads Farmers Market and received another \$970,000 in Fresh Checks dollars to spend on even more fresh fruits and vegetables. In 2022, we secured a federal grant that matches \$60,000 per year in SNAP purchases at Crossroads Farmers Market and the Takoma Park-Silver Spring Coop, which

makes fresh healthy fruits and vegetables more accessible to SNAP users - its open 14 hours per day, 362 days per year, and sources from Maryland farmers to stock its produce department.

At Crossroads, we see firsthand how programs that incentivize consumption of locally grown, fresh produce offer both health benefits to low-income communities and economic benefits to local farmers. Our shoppers can bring home twice as much healthy food, local farmers gain new customers and increase sales, and more food dollars stay in the local economy.

Thank you for your consideration of this important bill, and for your efforts to ensure every Maryland resident is food secure. Crossroads Farmers Market urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 35.

SB 35_MAP_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Mark Huffman

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 35

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

January 17, 2024, 1pm

Submitted by Kali Schumitz and Mark Huffman, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

211 Maryland

Anne Arundel County Food Bank

Baltimore Jewish Council

Behavioral Health System Baltimore

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Energy Advocates

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Family League of Baltimore

Fuel Fund of Maryland

Job Opportunities Task Force

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,
Inc.

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Community Action
Partnership

Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Paul's Place

St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore

Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

Kali Schumitz, Co-Chair

P: 410-412- 9105 ext 701

E: kschumitz@mdeconomy.org

Mark Huffman, Co-Chair

P: (301) 776-0442 x1033

E: MHuffman@laureladvocacy.org

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports SB 35, which would address the adequacy of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by raising the minimum benefit level.

Last year, SNAP lost a multitude of waivers and flexibilities that provided greater access to households to apply and maintain benefits, as well as a maximization of the monthly benefit amount through Emergency Allotments. This waiver provided an increased benefit corresponding to household size for all eligible SNAP families and individuals. Under this waiver, a household of one saw no less than \$281 a month and a household of four no less than \$973 a month. This waiver ended in March 2023, with all households seeing a decrease in their monthly allotments with some falling to as little as \$23 a month, the federal minimum.

The loss of emergency allotments not only affects households and individuals on SNAP, but the entire food system in the state. The amount of federal dollars coming into Maryland each month for SNAP dropped nearly \$70 million with the ending of emergency allotments. It is estimated that for every \$1 provided through SNAP, \$1.50 is generated in the local economy. These estimates would predict a loss of \$105 million in the economy every month and over \$1 billion annually.

Data from the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, which manages the Maryland Market Match program that provides matching dollars to SNAP users at farmers markets, showed a decrease in SNAP transactions at farmers markets during the 2023 season compared to 2022. Takoma Park/Silver Spring Co-Op, a community owned co-op with an emphasis on local and organic foods in Montgomery County, showed a decrease in overall SNAP purchases immediately following the loss of emergency allotments.

With Congress unable to pass a Farm Bill in 2022, other states have begun taking action to help remedy this hunger cliff. Immediately following the loss of emergency allotments, Massachusetts provided households with 40% of their maximum allotment for 3 months. The District of Columbia recently passed and funded Give SNAP A Raise, which will increase each SNAP household's monthly benefit by 10%. New Jersey increased the minimum benefit for households to \$50 in 2021 and further increased it to \$95 a month in 2023. Maryland can and should join other states in addressing SNAP benefit adequacy by boosting the minimum benefit.

Enacting this legislation shows a commitment from the state to provide for those impacted most by food insecurity and supplement a proven program that can lift families out of poverty.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 35.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.

SB0035_FAV_Montgomery County Food Council .pdf

Uploaded by: Michelle Caruso

Position: FAV



January 16, 2024

2024 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY
SBoo35: SNAP State Supplement

BILL: SBoo35: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

POSITION: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0035

BILL ANALYSIS: Repealing the minimum age that a member of a household must be for eligibility for a State-provided supplemental benefit under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; and increasing the amount of the supplemental benefit that the State must provide from \$40 to \$95.

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee:

The Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC) urges you to **SUPPORT** the SNAP State Supplement Bill, which will increase the minimum benefit available to residents enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to \$95.

As the state continues to grow and recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic it is clear that Maryland residents need more support. With increased costs for food and other household goods it is an important time to uplift and ease the burden for residents to get the food they need. Currently, the minimum SNAP benefit is \$23 a month for a household of up to two people. Individuals over 62 receive a state supplement bringing their minimum benefit up to \$40. In neither case is this minimum benefit sufficient to meet the needs of Maryland residents experiencing food insecurity.

As a state-funded SNAP Outreach Organization, MCFC has assisted thousands of Montgomery County residents attempting to navigate the SNAP enrollment process. In the past year, we have seen an increase in the number of individuals and families struggling because of rising food costs due to inflation and the end of COVID-era relief like the SNAP Emergency Allotments. The magnitude of these issues was documented in a recent



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report examining the Self-Sufficiency Standard in Montgomery County, i.e, the amount of income needed to support the basic needs of a family. This report found that a single parent with one preschool-aged child in Montgomery County needs to earn \$91,674 to cover the basic necessities of food, housing, child care, healthcare, and transportation without any financial assistance.¹

We regularly hear from clients about the insufficiency of the minimum SNAP Benefit. Many of these individuals are seniors, or adults with disabilities and chronic illness, who only receive the minimum SNAP benefit because their fixed income is at the limit of SNAP eligibility. Monthly budgets are eaten up by the high cost of housing and past-due medical expenses, and the minimum SNAP benefit is not enough to help cover the cost of healthy foods. Many state the minimum amount is not worth the time and effort needed to maintain their benefits.

We also hear from many working families who face similar struggles. MCFC regularly assists single working parents, who may not be eligible for SNAP themselves, but seek benefits for their SNAP-eligible children. Again, their income is just low enough to qualify for SNAP and far below the \$91,000 they would need to cover household costs in Montgomery County. The \$23 dollars they receive each month is not enough to cover the rising cost of groceries, and these families are still forced to make difficult choices between purchasing nutritious foods and meeting other essential needs.

Furthermore, the inadequacy of SNAP benefits has placed an unsustainable burden on community based organizations providing food assistance. In 2023, MCFC hosted a series of Listening Sessions with food assistance providers to ascertain the state of food insecurity in the county and the capacity of community based organizations to meet the needs of County residents. The fifty participating organizations consistently reported that the number of residents seeking food and other services remains high. Demand at distribution events and food pantries has matched levels experienced during the height of the COVID crisis and, in many cases, has increased above COVID levels. These community organizations specifically cited the high cost of living, nationwide inflation and decreases in federal nutrition program benefits as the cause of increased attendance.

¹ [The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Montgomery County, Maryland 2023](#), Prepared for the Montgomery County Community Action Agency by the University of Washington, September 2023



As a result of these increases, providers expressed that they are unable to meet the food assistance needs of their communities. Some providers are running out of food during distributions and are having to turn residents away. Some are changing their programs to stretch resources, such as by reducing the amount of food provided to each household during a distribution, not taking on new clients, or switching from drive through distributions to an appointment system. Clients are also having to wait longer to receive services such as food/meal delivery, which is needed by seniors, residents with young children, and those without transportation.

Enacting this legislation is a necessary step towards alleviating poverty in Maryland and increasing access to healthy foods. It will support the self-sufficiency of Maryland families and alleviate the burden of community organizations trying to fill the safety net gaps. For these reasons, the Montgomery County Food Council **supports Senate Bill 0035 and urges a FAVORABLE REPORT for this bill.**

The Montgomery County Food Council is a nonprofit organization that serves as the primary connection point for businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and residents around food system issues in our County. We bring together over 2,000 local and regional partners in community-wide education, advocacy, and capacity building initiatives. Our work cultivates a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable local food system by enhancing food access for the over 100,000 at risk for hunger, expanding food education opportunities for all residents, supporting our County's farms and food and beverage businesses, and addressing the impact of local food production, distribution, consumption and recycling on our natural resources

For more information, please contact Michelle Caruso, Director of Policy and Partnerships, at the email and phone number below.



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mocofoodcouncil.org | info@mocofoodcouncil.org

SB 35_HPRP_Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Michelle Madaio

Position: FAV



HOMELESS PERSONS REPRESENTATION PROJECT, INC.

201 North Charles Street, Suite 1104 Baltimore, MD 21201 (Headquarters)

P.O. Box 1787, Rockville, Maryland 20849 (Satellite Office)

(410) 685-6589 www.hprplaw.org

Support

SB 35 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, January 17, 2024

Testimony of Michelle S. Madaio, Director – Economic Justice Homeless Persons Representation Project

The Homeless Persons Representation Project, Inc. (HPRP) is a non-profit civil legal services organization that provides free legal representation to people who are experiencing homeless or at risk of homelessness on legal issues that will lead to an end to homelessness. HPRP regularly represents individuals and families in accessing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits through administrative appeals and advocacy.

SB 35 will help reduce hunger among Marylanders by increasing the minimum SNAP benefit to \$95 per month. HPRP has worked with many low-income individuals and families who only qualify for \$23 per month in SNAP, which is less than \$1 per day and simply not enough. Many of HPRP’s clients who receive only \$23¹ per month are working minimum-wage jobs. For example, Gina is a single mom who works at a school cafeteria and is immunocompromised due to a health condition. Gina spends nearly all her income on rent, utilities, transportation and other basic costs of supporting her daughter. Gina only qualifies for \$23/mo. in SNAP, which does not allow her to access the quantity or healthy foods she needs to sustain a nutritious diet.² Increasing the minimum SNAP benefit to \$95/mo. means Gina and other people experiencing food insecurity can purchase the groceries they need to stay healthy and avoid hunger.³

SB 35 would likely incentivize more Marylanders who qualify for SNAP to apply. Many older adults and people living with disabilities who receive federal disability benefits qualify for the minimum SNAP benefit, yet do not apply due to the low benefit amount. The onerous application process, travel on public transportation back and forth to the local Department of Social Services offices, long wait times, and paperwork simply make the process too cumbersome to complete for only \$23/mo. An increase to the minimum benefit would likely result in more low-income Marylanders utilizing the SNAP program.

HPRP strongly urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 35. If you have any questions, please contact Michelle Madaio (she/her), Director – Economic Justice at (410) 716-0521 or mmadaio@hprplaw.org.

¹ MD’s minimum SNAP benefit is \$23/mo for people age 61 and younger and \$40/mo for people age 62 and older.

² Lewis M, Herron LM, Chatfield MD, Tan RC, Dale A, Nash S, Lee AJ. Healthy Food Prices Increased More Than the Prices of Unhealthy Options during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Concurrent Challenges to the Food System. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, (Feb. 10, 2023), available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9967271/>.

³ Patricia M. Anderson, Kristin F. Butcher, “The Relationships Among SNAP Benefits, Grocery Spending, Diet Quality, and the Adequacy of Low-Income Families’ Resources,” Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, (June 2016) available at <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/6-14-16fa.pdf>.

SB0035-BT-SUPP (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB0035

January 17, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: SB 35: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 35.

SB 35 repeals the minimum age that a member of a household must be for eligibility for a State-provided supplemental benefit under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); and increases the amount of the supplemental benefit that the State must provide from \$40 to \$95. The timing for this bill is critical as emergency allotments ended in March 2023. Prior to March 2023, households received no less than \$281 per month, and a household of four received no less than \$973 per month. Currently, SNAP participants are relying on benefits as low as \$23 per month, the Federal minimum.

The loss of emergency allotments has resulted in a "benefits cliff", as 347,320 households across the state experienced a severe cut in SNAP benefits. Although the "benefits cliff" impacts all age groups, the steepest cliff has been for older adults, as many older adults qualify for the minimum SNAP benefit, which dropped from \$281 per month to \$23 per month. Immediately following the loss of emergency allotments, SNAP participation in Baltimore City decreased. As of November 2023, there are 153,055 Baltimore City residents enrolled in SNAP; this accounts for roughly 26% of the City's population.

Our on the ground experience hosting our current Resident Food Equity Advisors (RFEA) cohort has given us an invaluable perspective on this issue. RFEA are cohorts of Baltimore City residents that work to collectively drive equitable food policies through an inclusive, collaborative process. All Advisors receive compensation for their time. Our current cohort, all of whom are currently enrolled in SNAP and live in public housing sites, have expressed a decline in motivation to continue to apply for benefits, and the need to work multiple jobs in order to afford food. Additionally, many Advisors are currently relying on food banks and food pantries to meet their nutritional needs.

Lower monthly allotments, inflation, and residents relying on emergency food assistance is negatively impacting the State's food system. It is estimated that for every \$1 provided through SNAP, \$1.50 is generated in the local food economy. These estimates would result in a loss of \$105 million in the State's economy every month, and over \$1 billion annually. State-wide data from food retailers and farmers markets support this as we continue to see an overall decrease in purchases made using SNAP dollars.

The State of New Jersey and the District of Columbia have recently passed legislation to increase monthly benefits. It is crucial for Maryland to join other states in addressing the "benefits cliff" to support both our residents experiencing food insecurity and the State's food economy.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on SB 35.

*Annapolis – phone: 410.269.0207 • fax: 410.269.6785
Baltimore – phone: 410.396.3497 • fax: 410.396.5136
<https://mogr.baltimorecity.gov/>*

Maryland Assoc of LMBs support SB oo35.pdf

Uploaded by: Pamela Brown

Position: FAV

**Local power, collective voice
for Maryland's children, youth and families**

January 16, 2024

SUPPORT – SB035 - Budget and Taxation - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement

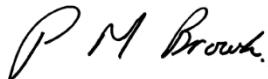
Dear Senators:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Local Management Boards, I am writing in support of SB035. Local Management Boards in each county and jurisdiction in the State of Maryland conduct needs assessments of their communities. As a result, we know there are children and youth across the state of Maryland who need access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

SB035 will remove the minimum age for a household member to receive the State-provided SNAP, while also increasing the dollar amount for recipients. Local Management Boards work directly with families every day and know they are still struggling to put food on the table in the wake of inflation. Increasing the SNAP benefit will feed more Marylanders and more low income families. Local Management Boards create and support programming to address children's hunger needs, and this bill will further the efforts of LMBs.

We urge you to support SB035, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement to feed low income Maryland families.

Sincerely,



Pamela M. Brown, PhD
Legislative Chair
Maryland Association of Local Management Boards

Testimony in support of SB0035.pdf

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0035_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
January 16, 2023

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#/0035 - FAVORABLE
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement

TO: Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0035, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement.

The rise in food costs has created significant difficulties for Marylanders to provide food for themselves and their families. The average price of food in the United States increased 2.7% in the 12 months ended December, after posting an annual increase of 2.9% in November, according to the latest inflation data published Jan. 11, 2024, by the U.S. Labor Department’s Bureau of Labor Statistics ([BLS](#)). As recently as August 2022, the rate of inflation for food at 11.4% was the highest since May 1979.

My Jewish faith calls on me at every Passover seder “... Jews around the world open the re-telling of the story by declaring: *ha lahma anya*, which includes the line “All who are hungry, come and eat!”. Our tradition teaches us to care for the poor and the orphan and the widow amongst us in the pursuit of justice.

This bill makes the moral statement that helping to feed others in our society by ensuring the poor do not go hungry, regardless of their age or the ages of persons in the household, is a value Maryland respects and encourages. Food insecurity can have dire consequences on the health of those suffering from it and causes increased costs to ameliorate those persons health. For children the effect on their ability to learn while their stomach is empty has been documented as dire. For reasons of Economic Justice I urge you to support this bill.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0035.

01.16 - SB 35 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Uploaded by: Robin McKinney

Position: FAV



SB 35 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement
Budget and Taxation Committee
January 16, 2024
SUPPORT

Chairman Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 35. This bill repeals the minimum age requirement for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility, as well as increases the minimum benefit an individual may receive in benefits from \$40 to \$95.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

According to Prosperity Now's most recent scorecard for Maryland, 20.2% of Maryland households experience income volatility, and 26.7% had difficulty paying for usual household expenses¹. This shows that at least one fifth of Marylanders struggle to pay for basic expenses, including food. SB35 would greatly benefit low-income Marylanders by increasing the minimum SNAP benefit amount to \$95. Currently, some households receive as low as \$23 in benefits per month, as that is the federal minimum. This SNAP benefit increase would allow families to purchase more food to last them through the month. Removing the minimum age for individuals to receive SNAP benefits would significantly expand the number of eligible Marylanders and therefore support more individuals and families throughout the state.

We have seen that SNAP not only lifts low-income households out of poverty, it also supports the local and national economy. According to a 2019 report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, every \$1 in SNAP benefits can contribute to the Gross National Product by up to \$1.50². This means that SB35 would both further the economic well-being of individual Marylanders as well as the state GDP as a whole.

Maryland would be following in the footsteps of other states who have implemented similar bills to SB35. Massachusetts provided households with 40% of their maximum allotment for 3 months. The District of Columbia funded a program that will increase each SNAP household's monthly benefit by 10%. New Jersey increased the minimum benefit for households to \$95 a month in 2023. Enacting SB35 would show our commitment to supporting low-income households who are most impacted by food insecurity, and support the overall health of the state's economy.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 35.

¹ Prosperity Now Scorecard: <https://scorecard.prosperitynow.org/reports#report-state-profile/24>

² USDA: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/july/quantifying-the-impact-of-snap-benefits-on-the-u-s-economy-and-jobs/>

MSCAN SB35 SNAP Increase Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Miicke

Position: FAV



Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network

MSCAN

AARP Maryland

*Alzheimer's
Association,
Maryland Chapters*

*Baltimore Jewish
Council*

Catholic Charities

*Central Maryland
Ecumenical Council*

Church of the Brethren

*Episcopal Diocese of
Maryland*

*Housing Opportunities
Commission of
Montgomery County*

*Jewish Community
Relations Council of
Greater Washington*

*Lutheran Office on
Public Policy in
Maryland*

*Maryland Association of
Area Agencies on Aging*

*Maryland Catholic
Conference*

*Mental Health
Association of Maryland*

Mid-Atlantic LifeSpan

*National Association of
Social Workers,
Maryland Chapter*

Presbytery of Baltimore

*The Coordinating
Center*

*MSCAN Co-Chairs:
Carol Lienhard
Sarah Mücke
410-542-4850*

Testimony in Support of SB35-Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement

Budget and Taxation Committee

January 17, 2024

Support

The Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network (MSCAN) is a statewide coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, faith-based and mission-driven organizations that supports policies that meet the housing, health and quality of care needs of Maryland's low and moderate-income seniors.

MSCAN supports Senate Bill 35 which repeals the minimum age for SNAP benefits of a household member to qualify and increases the minimum amount of the benefit from the state from \$40 to \$95 a month.

Many of our seniors are on fixed income and struggle with meeting their basic needs. Nearly one in five low- income seniors in Maryland struggles with hunger, resulting in Maryland having the 8th highest food insecurity rate among low-income seniors. Low-income seniors rely on Maryland's safety-net programs – like SNAP – to supplement their household budgets and purchase the items they need to live a healthy life. Unfortunately, one in five seniors who apply for SNAP in Maryland receive the minimum benefit, an amount that is woefully inadequate for seniors to access proper nutrition.

SB 35 will reduce hunger among all Marylanders by increasing the minimum benefit and taking away the age requirements while also helping the economy. Recipients spend their benefits on food in neighborhood grocery stores, farmers markets, and other local retailers. For every \$5 spent in SNAP benefits \$9 is generated in local economic activity, yielding a strong return on investment.

For the reasons stated above, MSCAN urges a favorable report on SB 35.

Thank you for your consideration.

SB35 SNAP increase.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Miicke

Position: FAV

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- RABBI ANDREW BUSCH
Past President
- HOWARD LIBIT
Executive Director

Written Testimony

Background: Senate Bill 35 (SB35) repeals the minimum age of a household member for state supplemental SNAP eligibility. It also increases the state supplement from \$40 to \$95 a month.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Adat Chaim Congregation
- American Jewish Committee
- Americans for Peace Now
Baltimore Chapter
- American Israel Public Affairs Committee
- American Red Magen David for Israel
- American Zionist Movement
- Amit Women
- Association of Reform Zionists of America
- Baltimore Board of Rabbis
- Baltimore Hebrew Congregation
- Baltimore Jewish Green and Just Alliance
- Baltimore Men's ORT
- Baltimore Zionist District
- Beth Am Congregation
- Beth El Congregation
- Beth Israel Congregation
- Beth Shalom Congregation of
Howard County
- Beth Tfiloh Congregation
- B'nai B'rith, Chesapeake Bay Region
- B'nai Israel Congregation
- B'nai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation
- Bolton Street Synagogue
- Chevra Ahavas Chesed, Inc.
- Chevrei Tzedek Congregation
- Chizuk Amuno Congregation
- Congregation Beit Tikvah
- Congregation Tiferes Yisroel
- Federation of Jewish Women's
Organizations of Maryland
- Hadassah
- Har Sinai - Oheb Shalom Congregation
J Street
- Jewish Federation of Howard County
- Jewish Labor Committee
- Jewish War Veterans
- Jewish War Veterans, Ladies Auxiliary
- Jewish Women International
- Jews For Judaism
- Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah
Hebrew Congregation
- National Council of Jewish Women
- Ner Tamid Congregation
- Rabbinical Council of America
- Religious Zionists of America
- Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation
- Shomrei Emunah Congregation
- Suburban Orthodox Congregation
- Temple Beth Shalom
- Temple Isaiah
- Zionist Organization of America
Baltimore District

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated Jewish Federation of Baltimore and its agencies, including Jewish Community Services, which helps low-income individuals in need. We respectfully urge the Committee to support SB35. Currently the state SNAP minimum benefit is \$40 a month for households with a member at least 62 years old. This is just over a \$1 a day. This amount is grossly inadequate for individuals and families to access the vital nutrition needed to live a healthy life. SB35 will reduce food insecurity and combat hunger among all low-income individuals, not just those with household members at least 62 years old. By removing the age barrier households with young families would be able to benefit more from SNAP. Further, SNAP helps generate local economic activity since every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.85 for the local economy.

For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB35

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

SB35_MRA_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Price

Position: FAV

MARYLAND RETAILERS ALLIANCE

The Voice of Retailing in Maryland



SB35 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
January 17, 2024

Position: Favorable

Background: SB35 would increase the base benefit for all participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Maryland.

Comments: The Maryland Retailers Alliance (MRA) strongly supports **SB35 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement** which would increase the base benefit amount for all participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Though the immediate economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are behind us, many Marylanders are still experiencing a higher cost of living, including high housing and utility costs and increased prices for groceries and other material goods. The end of the P-EBT program at the federal level has also negatively impacted many shoppers who came to depend on the additional funds supplementing the existing base benefit amount of \$40. Increasing the base benefit amount to \$95 for all beneficiaries would positively impact the thousands of Marylanders who depend on SNAP funds.

MRA would respectfully urge a favorable vote on SB35. Thank you for your consideration.

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_SB0035.pdf

Uploaded by: William Thorne

Position: FAV



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County Executive

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Director of Government Affairs

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Deputy Director of Government Affairs

AMANDA KONTZ CARR
Legislative Officer

WILLIAM J. THORNE
Legislative Associate

BILL NO.: **SB 35**

TITLE: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement
SPONSOR: Senator McCray

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation

POSITION: **Support**

DATE: January 17, 2024

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 35 – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement. This legislation ensures that any person receiving federal SNAP benefits less than \$95 will receive additional benefits from the State. Furthermore, it eliminates the age qualification for the benefits provided by the State’s expansion of SNAP, and increases the threshold amount for federal benefits.

Low-income Maryland residents have seen their cost of living increase sharply due to the inflationary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The average cost of groceries in Maryland is over \$300 a month for one person. This legislation will help ease the burden of these high food prices on working families.

Ensuring that every child receives access to fresh, healthy foods is a priority for Baltimore County. SB 35 will further critical initiatives taken in the County, such as Summer SNAP for Children, to reduce food insecurity and increase access to healthy and fresh foods. Baltimore County appreciates the continued partnership between the State and the County in ensuring that our vulnerable populations have access to the food they need.

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 35. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.