



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

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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.