



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/>