February 20, 2024
HB 718
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Seniors – Minimum Benefit

House Appropriations Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of House Bill 718. 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.

House Bill 718 would require the State to provide a benefit of at least $40 under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to households with individuals who are at least 65 years old and have a gross annual household income that does not exceed $50,000.

Our Catholic faith teaches the importance of caring for the most vulnerable members of society, including our elderly brothers and sisters who may be struggling to make ends meet. Providing access to nutritious food is not only a basic human right but also a moral imperative rooted in the principles of human dignity and solidarity.

As our population ages, many older adults face financial challenges that make it difficult to afford essential expenses, including food. For those living on fixed incomes or limited resources, access to adequate nutrition can become a daily struggle. No one should have to choose between buying groceries and paying for other necessities such as housing, healthcare, or utilities.

By ensuring that households with elderly individuals receive a minimum SNAP benefit of $40, we can help alleviate food insecurity and improve the overall well-being of our senior population. Adequate nutrition is critical for maintaining good health, managing chronic conditions, and promoting independence and quality of life as individuals age.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 718.