

February 8, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Miller Office Building, 3 East
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB0213- HUMAN SERVICES - FOOD SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM
(SUMMER SNAP FOR CHILDREN ACT) - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for consideration of Senate Bill 0213 (SB0213). With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS helps Marylanders in economic need, provides preventive services, and protects children and adults. The Family Investment Administration (FIA) within DHS administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) program which is impacted by SB0213.

Since the bill was enacted in 2019, Summer SNAP for Children has grown from serving 3,923 children in four jurisdictions to 90,571 children in fourteen jurisdictions in 2023. The proposed amendments to Human Service §5-501.1 seek to address certain timelines which do not align with the state's budgeting schedule and the federal SNAP program. The deadlines outlined in the Summer SNAP for Children Act bill present operational challenges to DHS to make sure we serve our customers more seamlessly.

The Act requires DHS to initiate the Summer SNAP application for local jurisdictions in December, which is before local program budgets are determined. Also, in its current form, the Act requires that Summer SNAP benefits be issued 15 days following the dates on which federal SNAP benefits are issued in June through August; and 7 days after the December issuance. In Maryland, SNAP benefits are issued monthly between the 4th and the 23rd, based on the first three letters of the recipient's last name. If DHS follows the schedule stipulated in the Act, some of the Summer SNAP benefits will not be issued in the designated month. This causes unnecessary and burdensome confusion for the customer and puts the agency at risk of audit findings.

We request the partnership of the Committee in amending 5-501.1(G) on page 4 of the bill to state that funding for Summer SNAP for Children is subject to limitations in the State budget, and may be used at the discretion of DHS. Amending 5-501.1(G) is necessary for the continued administration of Summer SNAP for Children. The amendments will build on the progress of the 2023 state Summer SNAP program which enabled local departments of social services to serve the children with the greatest food needs. The amendments give DHS the flexibility to align resources for the state Summer SNAP Program with the new federal Summer EBT Program allowing Maryland to maximize the federal funds to serve an estimated 500,000 school-age children's nutritional needs when they are out of school and unable to rely on free or reduced school meals beginning Summer 2024.



The Department's amendments make the following changes:

On page 2, strike beginning with "3." in line 25 down through "4." in line 29 and substitute "3."; and in line 31, strike "5." and substitute "4.".

On page 3, in line 11, after "plan" insert ", **COORDINATED WITH THE DEPARTMENT,**".

On page 4, strike in their entirety lines 26 through 28, inclusive, and substitute:

"(G) SUBJECT TO THE STATE BUDGET, THE DEPARTMENT MAY USE THE FUNDING THE STATE IS REQUIRED TO PROVIDE UNDER SUBSECTION(B)(1) OF THIS SECTION TO:

(1) PROVIDE FUNDS TO A COUNTY TO SUPPLEMENT BENEFITS; AND

(2) OFFSET ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF THE FEDERAL SUMMER ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER PROGRAM."

We appreciate the opportunity to submit SB0213 and the Department's amendments to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. We look forward to working with you and welcome continued collaboration on SB0213.

If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at rachel.sledge@maryland.gov.

In service,



Rafael López
Secretary