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February 8, 2024

COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee

BILL: SB 213 – Human Services – Food Supplement Program
(Summer SNAP for Children Act)

POSITION: Support

The Horizon Foundation is the largest independent health philanthropy in Maryland. We are committed to a Howard County free from systemic inequities, where all people can live abundant and healthy lives.

The Foundation is pleased to support SB 213 – Human Services – Food Supplement Program (Summer SNAP for Children Act).

SB 213 would increase annual appropriations for the Summer Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Children to \$5 million from \$200,000. This translates to \$30 per month for each child in eligible households during the summer, and \$10 per child during the month of December.

This critical program works to address food insecurity during summer and winter school breaks when low-income children do not have access to free school meals. Children's food insecurity has been a problem across the nation for many years but became a glaring crisis in the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic when schools – which are many students' primary or only source of healthy food during the day – closed. Rightly so, the federal government granted waivers to schools to offer universal free school lunch to students through the pandemic, and communities across the nation, including Howard County, came together to try and fill the gaps to ensure children did not go hungry. Those pandemic-era waivers have expired, requiring families to qualify for these programs once again based on income.

Like other communities across the state, Howard County families have felt the pain of rising food costs and an increasingly high cost of living. Though we are known as an affluent county, our lower- and middle-income students and their families are at risk of, or are

already experiencing, food insecurity. SB 213 would give these families a much-needed financial boost and ensure that students do not have to worry about whether they will have food to eat during the day when they are on break from school.

Providing healthy school meals has long been a priority for the Horizon Foundation. Years ago, we launched a pilot program with the Howard County Public School System to increase fruit and vegetable offerings and offer more nutritious meals at three elementary schools. That program is now standard in every Howard County school. Students of every age in Howard County and across Maryland deserve healthy food to eat and no child should ever go hungry just because school is on break. For this reason, the Horizon Foundation **SUPPORTS SB 213 and urges a FAVORABLE report.**

Thank you for your consideration.