



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

January 30, 2025

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

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB0226 - MARYLAND FARMS AND FAMILIES FUND-PURPOSE
AND USE-ALTERATIONS - POSITION: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Beidle and Members of the Finance Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and the opportunity to provide favorable testimony for Senate Bill 226 (SB 226).

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS empowers Marylanders to reach their full potential by providing preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities. Our Family Investment Administration implements the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) serving over 382,000 households. We distributed more than \$125M in SNAP benefits on average each month in State Fiscal Year 2025. This past summer, SUN Bucks, our summer nutrition program helped feed more than 594,000 children in every single one of our jurisdictions across the state. Maryland issued \$71.5 million in federally-funded grocery buying benefits from June to August, making SUN Bucks the largest investment to combat childhood hunger during the summer months in Maryland's history.

Both SNAP and SUN Bucks are issued on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card used to purchase food at approved retailers. Farmers' markets in Maryland are among our approved retailers, enabling SNAP and SUN Bucks customers to shop locally. Farmers' markets offer a unique opportunity for SNAP customers to access fresh, locally grown produce and other nutritious foods. For many SNAP and SUN Bucks

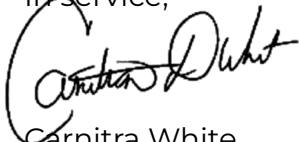
25 S. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-3500
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customers, farmers' markets improve accessibility in terms of location, cost, and product quality. Farmers' markets provide an alternative to conventional grocery stores especially in underserved communities or food deserts.

Over 60 participating farmers markets within the State currently accept [Maryland Market Money](#) (MMM). MMM allows purchases using federal nutrition benefits at participating Maryland farmers markets. With the proposed matching funds, farmers' markets are incentivized to expand their participation in SNAP and SUN Bucks, enabling Marylanders to purchase healthier food options using their benefits. We support SB 226 as it addresses healthier food access within our communities, expanding and improving access for SNAP and SUN Bucks customers.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide favorable testimony to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at rachel.sledge@maryland.gov.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carnitra White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Carnitra White
Principal Deputy Secretary