



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 226

### Maryland Farms and Families Fund - Purpose and Use - Alterations

*Senate Finance Committee*

January 30, 2025

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair Hayes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, Maryland Hunger Solutions strongly supports SB 226 – Maryland Farms and Families Fund, which aims to streamline the administration of funds for the Maryland Market Money (MMM) program by eliminating the need for a grant application process and allowing the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) or a qualified nonprofit to directly implement the program, enhancing efficiency and accessibility.

As a statewide, non-partisan, nonprofit dedicated to ending hunger in Maryland, Maryland Hunger Solutions strives to overcome existing barriers to state and federal nutrition assistance programs and create self-sustaining connections between Maryland residents and nutritious foods.

The Maryland Market Money (MMM) program has proven to be a critical support for both Marylanders facing food insecurity and local farmers by providing a dollar-for-dollar match for purchases made using federal nutrition benefits – such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), WIC and Senior Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program at participating Maryland farmers markets, farm stands, and CSAs.

Recent state data reveals that in 2024, over 692,000 Marylanders participated in SNAP, while in 2023, there were over 188,000 WIC participants. By doubling the purchasing power of these benefit recipients, this program not only helps to alleviate economic barriers for many Maryland residents, but it also keeps federal benefit dollars in the local economy and supports local agricultural producers. According to the [Maryland Market Money 2023 Annual Report](#), on average, every \$1 spent is accompanied by \$1.70 in federal benefits spending, resulting in \$2.70 for local farmers.

Since 2020, The Maryland Market Money program has been jointly run by Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) and the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). Under this partnership, the program has grown to operate in over 60 access points, serving 722 agricultural producers as of 2023. Despite the success of this partnership, current regulations require a grant application process in order for SMADC to



access the funds to implement the program, which causes considerable staff time and administrative burden to both SMADC and MDA. SB 226 aims to streamline that process by eliminating the need for a grant and allowing these funds to be directly administered by MDA and a nonprofit partner of their choosing.

Streamlining this process for Maryland Market Money will help ensure that MDA and SMADC can continue their partnership with less administrative hurdles, allowing them to direct more of their time and resources to the purpose of the program – supporting access to healthy foods for all Marylanders at Maryland Farmers Markets.

In conclusion, we urge a favorable report for SB 226. Thank you for your time and consideration.