

## **SB 461**

### **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Heat and Eat Program – Eligibility Senate Finance Committee February 18, 2026**

#### **FAVORABLE**

Senate Bill 461 aims to conform state law and program administration to new federal law on the Heat and Eat program with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

In July 2025, Congress passed and enacted HR 1, a large omnibus-type bill spanning various topics and issue areas. Of note was significant changes to the SNAP program, including eligibility restrictions, widened work requirements for vulnerable populations, and significant state cost-sharing measures. Although the state administers SNAP, it is a federal program funded historically with federal dollars. As such, the state is required to implement and match program restrictions that Congress has enacted. SB 461 is the first of likely many measures conforming state law to new federal policies.

The Heat and Eat program allows low-income Marylanders who are dually eligible for SNAP benefits and energy assistance through the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) or the state Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) to receive additional SNAP dollars. Provisions in HR 1 intend to restrict eligibility to the Heat and Eat Program by limiting the benefit to households with elderly or disabled persons. Prior to HR 1, the state administered the program with wider eligibility.

The Maryland Food Bank sees everyday that Marylanders facing food insecurity are not hungry in a vacuum. There are other impacts of poverty burdening families, notably the ability to afford basic household necessities – and paying utility costs is certainly one of them. In fact, utility assistance has been the most requested additional help from our SNAP outreach team over the past few years.

For the record, the Maryland Food Bank is strongly opposed to any measure that restricts food access, including limitations on food assistance benefits. However, we also recognize the legal and statutory requirement for DHS to comply with existing federal law. As such, we support DHS and the Maryland General Assembly in taking this necessary step and intend to work hand-in-hand to implement the requirements of HR 1 in the state.

The Maryland Food Bank appreciates your consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 461.