



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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

February 18, 2026

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

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB 461 - SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM-
HEAT AND EAT PROGRAM- ELIGIBILITY - 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 respectfully requests a favorable report for Senate Bill (SB) 461.

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS provides preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to assist Marylanders in reaching their full potential. Our Family Investment Administration (FIA) implements the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which is affected by SB 461. SNAP has a provision, known as "Heat and Eat" which enables SNAP customers to maximize their nutrition benefits if they also receive federally-funded energy assistance. The proposed bill updates the statutory language in [Human Services §5-506](#) to ensure the Standard Utility Allowance is only applicable to households with an elderly or disabled member.

Recent federal legislation changes stemming from [H.R.1](#) restrict eligibility for the Heat and Eat program. Now, only households that have an elderly or disabled member qualify for the standard utility allowance when receiving energy assistance funded by the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). For more information on how H.R.1 changes impact Marylanders, please see DHS' [January 28 Committee briefing materials](#).

Without this legislative fix in SB 461, Maryland would face a substantial financial burden. The state Heat and Eat program, authorized in [Human Services §5-506](#), relies on federal funding. If Maryland does not align its program with federal law, the state would become responsible for over \$107M in SNAP benefits per program year. The additional costs would result from a loss of federal SNAP benefits for approximately 108,136 households that currently receive the Heat and Eat benefit but do not have an elderly or disabled member. The households will still retain SNAP eligibility, but will no longer receive the additional benefit amount provided under Heat and Eat's Standard Utility Allowance.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide a favorable testimony to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. If you require additional information, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at justin.hayes1@maryland.gov.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rafael López', written in a cursive style.

Rafael López
Secretary