

# **SB 461 - Maryland Food Bank - FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Anne Wallerstedt

Position: FAV

## **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.

**SB0461\_DHS\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Justin Hayes

Position: FAV



**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](mailto: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

# **SB 461 Testimony\_Cory McCray.pdf**

Uploaded by: Marvin "DOC" Cheatham

Position: FAV

CORY V. MCCRAY  
Legislative District 45  
Baltimore City



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 221  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3165 • 301-858-3165  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3165  
Cory.Mccray@senate.state.md.us

Budget and Taxation Committee  
Capital Budget Subcommittee  
Health and Human Services Subcommittee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

## Vote Yes On Senate Bill 0461

**Bill Title: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Heat and Eat Program –  
Eligibility Committee: Finance Committee  
Hearing Date: February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

Dear Chair and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 461, legislation that strengthens food security for Maryland's most vulnerable residents by prioritizing households that include elderly or disabled individuals.

Senate Bill 461 updates eligibility requirements for the Heat and Eat Program to ensure that limited resources are directed to seniors and individuals with disabilities who face the greatest risk of food insecurity and financial hardship. By aligning assistance with need, this bill promotes fairness and responsible stewardship of public funds.

Many elderly and disabled individuals live on fixed incomes and must balance rising costs for food, housing, and utilities. These financial pressures often force families to make difficult choices between necessities. This legislation helps relieve that burden by improving access to nutrition assistance and ensuring households can better meet both food and energy needs.

The Heat and Eat Program plays an important role in expanding SNAP benefits by recognizing utility expenses in eligibility calculations. Strengthening this program supports better health outcomes, reduces hunger, and helps vulnerable residents maintain independence and stability in their communities.

By focusing support on those who need it most, Senate Bill 461 advances equity, economic security, and public well-being across Maryland.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cory V. McCray".

Cory V. McCray  
45<sup>th</sup> District

# **Maryland Catholic Conference\_FAVSB461\_.pdf**

Uploaded by: Michelle Zelaya

Position: FAV



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

February 18<sup>th</sup> 2026

SB461

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Heat and Eat Program – Eligibility  
Finance Committee  
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 461**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state’s second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

**Senate Bill 461** alters eligibility requirements for the Heat and Eat Program within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by requiring participating households to include at least one elderly or disabled individual. The Heat and Eat Program links energy assistance with SNAP benefits, ensuring that households receiving help with heating costs also qualify for increased nutritional assistance. By refining eligibility to specifically include elderly and disabled individuals, this legislation prioritizes households whose needs are the greatest and whose financial burdens are often the most severe.

This policy provides meaningful benefits across the State of Maryland by reducing food insecurity, lowering the economic strain on vulnerable households, and ensuring that taxpayer resources are directed to those with the most significant needs. Maryland communities benefit when their older adults and individuals with disabilities can maintain stable housing and proper nutrition, two essential components of health and safety. Families caring for aging parents or disabled family members will have greater reassurance that essential needs are met. On the individual level, this legislation protects some of the state’s most vulnerable residents, ensuring they do not have to choose between heating their homes and putting food on the table—an impossible decision no Marylander should have to make.

**Senate Bill 461** directly reflects the Church’s call to care for the poor and marginalized and to prioritize their basic needs above all else. Ensuring that elderly and disabled individuals can safely live, eat, and remain in their homes embodies the principles of solidarity and the preferential option for the poor. This bill affirms our collective responsibility to safeguard the dignity of those too often overlooked and ensures that compassion remains at the heart of public policy.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **Senate Bill 461**.

# **Testimony in support of SB0461 - Heat and Eat Prog**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0461\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV

02/18/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#/0461 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**  
**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Heat and Eat Program – Eligibility**

**TO:** Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Finance Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB#/0461, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Heat and Eat Program – Eligibility**

The [Heat and Eat \(H-EAT\) program](#) (often called H-EAT) is a state-level initiative in several U.S. states, **including Maryland**, that increases Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. By providing a small, nominal LIHEAP (Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program) payment, it allows households to qualify for the highest Standard Utility Allowance (SUA), thereby maximizing their monthly food benefits. <sup>1</sup>

The program ensures that households, particularly seniors and those with disabilities, can afford both utilities and food, as the higher utility deduction reduces countable income, thereby increasing the food assistance amount.

This bill expands the program into households based on additional categories that will qualify them for entry into the program.

This bill will make this happen by altering the eligibility requirements for the Heat and Eat Program within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in the Department of Human Services to require a household to include an elderly or disabled individual.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0461.**

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<sup>1</sup> Google AI Search “heat and eat program in snap”



**SB0451\_SusanAllen\_Favorable with Amendment.pdf**

Uploaded by: Susan Allen

Position: FWA



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

### SB 0461 SNAP HEAT AND EAT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

**TO: Maryland General Assembly Finance Committee**

**FROM: Susan Allen, member of the Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network (MEPPN)**  
3463 Rockway Avenue  
Annapolis, MD 21403  
410-626-2068

**DATE: Wednesday, February 18, 2026**

**Dear Chair Beidle, Co-Chair Hayes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee**

**Recommended Amendment: These restrictions on SNAP Heat and Eat Program Eligibility are required by 2025 Federal policy changes authorized in the Congressional Budget and Reconciliation Bill HR1.**

The Heat and Eat Program has effectively provided assistance to thousands of Marylanders yearly since Delegate Charkoudian (District 20) and Senator McCray (District 45) introduced legislation for this program during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021. MEPPN strongly supports the additional assistance for food costs and utility bills that Heat and Eat provides to our most struggling neighbors.

MEPPN understands that 2025 Federal policy changes require states to limit Heat and Eat Eligibility to families with elderly and/or disabled members. These families are, of course, highly deserving and should receive priority. There are, however, other high priority Marylanders like families with young children who also could receive priority.

**As common practice**, when cuts to social safety net programs are mandated by the Federal government, **we believe MD amending legislation should clearly indicate that these eligibility restrictions are the result of Congressional or Executive action—not the actions of our Maryland officials.**

The amendment we recommend will document for voters how policy changes in the Heat and Eat safety net program have been made. **This amendment will establish accountability.**

MEPPN urges a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS vote on SB O461 SNAP Heat and Eat Eligibility bill.

*The Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network (MEPPN) is a ministry of The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, The Episcopal Diocese of Washington, and The Delaware-Maryland Synod ELCA*



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# **Informational Testimony - SB 461- SNAP Heat & Eat**

Uploaded by: LaMonika Jones

Position: INFO



# Maryland Hunger Solutions

*Ending hunger and promoting well-being*

February 18, 2026

**TESTIMONY FOR SB 461**  
**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Heat and Eat Program - Eligibility**  
**Informational Only**  
*Senate Finance Committee*

Greetings Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair Hayes, and Members of the Finance Committee.

My name is LaMonika Jones. I am the Director of Maryland Hunger Solutions. We are a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to end hunger, improve nutrition and promote the well-being of Marylanders by maximizing participation in federal nutrition programs, addressing root causes of hunger and advocating for permanent solutions upending hunger and poverty statewide. We strive to overcome existing barriers to state and federal nutrition assistance programs and create self-sustaining connections for low-income Maryland residents experiencing food insecurity.

Maryland Hunger Solutions conducts robust Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach across the state providing direct application assistance to any Marylander seeking to apply for SNAP, offering one-on-one support to complete applications, gathering required documentation, troubleshoot case issues, and navigate recertification.

Our goal is to reduce barriers to enrollment and help ensure individuals and families can access the food assistance they need in a timely manner.

We regularly support residents who report skipping meals, rationing food, and limiting utility use to prioritize other basic living expenses. “Heat and Eat” is a necessary measure needed to help families and households mitigate these harmful trade-offs. No household should have to choose between food, utility or housing cost in order to meet their most basic needs.

The Heat and Eat Program, a \$21 once-a-year payment, helps SNAP households qualify for the Standard Utility Allowance (SUA), the highest utility deduction available when calculating SNAP benefit amounts. Qualifying for the SUA results in increased SNAP benefits for eligible households. By deeming all SNAP households automatically eligible for the utility allowance, we are ensuring residents who live on lower and fixed incomes, can receive higher and more adequate SNAP benefits without facing unnecessary administrative barriers.

Recent federal policy changes H.R. 1/”OBBA” impose the largest structural changes and benefit cuts in SNAP’s history, disproportionately thousands of Maryland residents. H.R. 1/”OBBA” has reshaped SNAP and Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) eligibility in ways that targets working families experiencing food insecurity and rising utility costs. H.R. 1/”OBBA” also changes how states are required to apply the Standard Utility Allowance (SUA). Under these new rules, only households with elderly or disabled persons are automatically eligible to receive the SUA when they receive a qualifying LIHEAP or “Heat and Eat” energy assistance payment. Households without an



## **Maryland Hunger Solutions**

*Ending hunger and promoting well-being*

elderly or disabled member no longer automatically qualify for the SUA and require additional verifications of heating and cooling expenses – making it harder for many low-income families to maintain higher benefit amounts.

More than 680,000 Marylanders including upwards of 270,000 children [rely on support](#) from SNAP benefits to feed themselves and their families. Of this 680,000, 59 percent are working families relying on access to additional supports from programs such as “Heat and Eat”. Changes to LIHEAP under federal rules would mean close to 119,000 residents would lose access to critical support for rising utility costs thus reducing SNAP benefits, potentially exacerbating food insecurity and pushing thousands of Marylanders over hunger cliff, including households with children.

For these reasons, Maryland Hunger Solutions respectfully asks the committee to consider this informational testimony regarding SB 461 on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Heat and Eat Program eligibility.

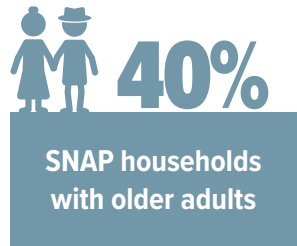
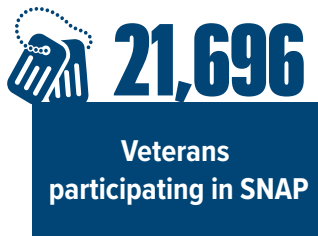
# PROTECT SNAP to Reduce Hunger and Strengthen Local Economies in MARYLAND

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation’s first line of defense against hunger, helping **693,715** people in **MARYLAND** put food on the table. In fiscal year 2024, SNAP brought **\$1,498,978,722** to the state. With **10%** of **MARYLAND** households experiencing food insecurity and high food prices, protecting and strengthening SNAP is more important than ever.

**! TAKE ACTION: REJECT PROPOSALS THAT CUT OR RESTRICT ACCESS TO SNAP BENEFITS.**

Proposed cuts mean fewer federal funds supporting local economies, children losing school meals, and decreasing WIC participation for babies and toddlers ages 0–4. These cuts would increase hunger by taking food away from Americans in need, decrease local revenue, and overwhelm already strained food pantries. **For every meal a pantry provides, SNAP offers nine.**

## SNAP’S IMPACT IN MARYLAND



▶ **11%** of households in **MARYLAND** participated in SNAP. SNAP participants reside throughout the state: **one in 7 rural and one in 6 small-town households** and **one in 9 households in metro areas in MARYLAND.**

▶ In FY 2024, SNAP participants in **MARYLAND** received an **average of \$180.12 per month** in SNAP benefits. This averages **\$5.92 per person per day.**

▶ SNAP helped over **256,482 children in MARYLAND** in FY 2023. It also provided these children with eligibility for school meals. Cuts to SNAP would mean that children in families with low incomes would lose access to school meals.

## KEY ECONOMIC FACTS

▶ **SNAP supports working families.** Between 2019–2023, an average of **84%** of SNAP households in **MARYLAND** included someone who was working.

▶ **SNAP stimulates the economy and creates jobs.** Each SNAP dollar has up to a \$1.80 impact during economic downturns, supporting the supply chain from farmer to store.

▶ **SNAP supports local businesses,** including **3,821 retailers in MARYLAND,** which redeemed a total of **\$1,929,524,491** in 2023. Retailers include grocery stores and farmers’ markets, which contribute to local taxes that fund services like schools and health care.

SOURCES FOR THIS FACT SHEET CAN BE FOUND IN THE [TECHNICAL NOTES.](#)

## SNAP IS A PROVEN, COST-EFFECTIVE PROGRAM

that reduces food insecurity, supports the health of children, older adults, and veterans. SNAP reduces health care costs, improves educational outcomes, and supports local economies. Support MARYLAND families by opposing any cuts to SNAP.

# STRENGTHEN SNAP, STRENGTHEN MARYLAND