

March 10, 2020

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing in support of HB 1532, the Protect Against Hunger Act. This legislation is intended to shield Marylanders who are experiencing poverty and who are eligible for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) from the recent federal policy proposals which are designed limit SNAP participation. In particular, it protects against proposed federal rulemaking with regard to broad-based categorical eligibility and the standard utility allowance.

Broad-based categorical eligibility” (BBCE), enables states to raise SNAP income eligibility limits so that some low-income working families can receive help affording adequate food. Many low-income working families often have difficulty making ends meet, because of costly housing or child care expenses that consume a sizeable share of their income. This policy, adopted in some form by more than 40 states and in effect for more than two decades, lets states use less restrictive asset tests so that families, seniors, and people with disabilities can have modest savings without losing SNAP. The proposed regulatory proposal would reduce the ability of states to utilize categorical eligibility, which will both reduce SNAP participation and reduce benefits. This will also have the residual impact of reducing free school meals for over 950,000 students nationwide, and thousands of students in Maryland.

The standard utility allowance (SUA) is a fixed dollar amount for a household's heating and utility expenses used in the calculation of shelter expenses for SNAP benefits. The recent proposal is an attempt to use national data which will have the impact of reducing benefits in many states, including Maryland.

We know that there are over 600,000 Marylanders who utilize the SNAP program, many of whom are children, seniors and the disabled. We believe that reducing their benefits would have harmful health, nutrition, and economic impacts on our state and especially on our poorest residents.

Ensuring a “status quo” in terms of benefits and participation would be a prudent policy for Maryland. We urge your support for HB 1532.

Thank you for your consideration.

Maryland Hunger Solutions

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Baltimore Jewish Council

Maryland Food Bank

Paul’s Place, Inc.

MANNA Food Center

Critical Issue Forum

Prince George’s County Food Equity Council

Identity Inc.

Public Justice Center

Community Action Council of Howard County

Maryland Family Network