

DATE: January 9, 2020

BILL NUMBER: SB49

COMMITTEE: Finance

BILL TITLE: Department of Human Services – Food Supplement Program -Renaming

DHS POSITION: Support

PRESENTED BY: Netsanet Kibret, Executive Director
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Department of Human Services

Good afternoon Madam Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman and members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 49.

My name is Netsanet Kibret and I am the Executive Director of the Family Investment Administration, within the Department of Human Services.

SB 49 is a Departmental Bill that would rename the Food Supplement Program to be the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The purpose of the bill is to align the State's program name with the federal program name.

By way of historical context, in the summer of 2008, the U.S. Congress passed the Food, Conservation and Energy Act (also known as the Farm Bill) mandating a new national name for what was then known as the Food Stamp Program. The Farm Bill renamed the FSP as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or "SNAP". The stated three main objectives of the new name were:

1. A focus on nutrition. The program helps low-income people consume a more nutritious diet by supplementing their food budget.
2. A reflection of a more modern program. There are no more program stamps or coupons. Electronic benefit transfer is the sole means of benefit issuance.
3. A reduction in the stigma associated with "food stamps". Historically, some customers felt embarrassed to apply for benefits or use their coupons at grocery stores. The new name helps reduce stigma by stressing the importance of nutrition. The EBT card also reduces the appearance that the user is different from any other shopper.

States were not mandated by Congress to adopt the name change. Since then, thirty-three states, including Maryland's neighbors (Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, Virginia and West Virginia) changed their state program name to SNAP. Maryland is one of 18 states that did not adopt the national program name.

The Department of Human Services now recognizes that by aligning our state food supplement program with the federal name the positive outcomes are twofold:

