



SB913 – SUPPORT
Ayesha Holmes
Share Our Strength/No Kid Hungry
aholmes@strength.org (410)205.1016

SB913 Support
Supplemental Assistance Program – Heat and Eat Program

Finance Committee
February 18, 2021

Dear Chair Kelley and Members of the Finance Committee:

Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Maryland campaign strongly supports SB913, the Heat and Eat Program. No Kid Hungry Maryland is a campaign of national anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength. Since 2008, Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Maryland campaign has worked with partners, schools and advocates to end childhood hunger throughout the state. No Kid Hungry Maryland leads the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland.

Twenty-two percent (22%) of kids in Maryland are growing up in a family that struggles with hunger. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a vital support to many families, and it serves as the front line of defense against poverty, food insecurity, and the long-term detriments they cause. Indeed, based on data from 2009 to 2012, SNAP kept 104,000 people out of poverty in Maryland, including 47,000 children, each year.¹

Heat & Eat is a federal program that states can utilize to boost SNAP benefits for SNAP recipients who are also eligible for and accessing energy assistance. By implementing this program, the state could provide millions of dollars of additional SNAP benefits to low-income Marylanders who are eligible for these federal dollars. The program is designed to address energy assistance for homes as well as for apartments where utility costs are included in the rent. As authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill, a minimum of \$20 must be expended in energy assistance to qualify for the increased SNAP benefit. A 2016 analysis by MD DHS estimates that approximately 32,000 Marylanders would receive an average \$59 boost to their SNAP benefits monthly. The effects of the pandemic have most likely increased this number.

If implemented by Maryland, Heat and Eat will benefit SNAP participants all across the state; seniors, families with children, as well as veterans and those with disabilities. During this time, with the increased challenges posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic, this program is especially important. By targeting those accessing both SNAP and energy assistance, it lifts those struggling with both food insecurity and energy costs. SNAP is a powerful tool to enable eligible participants to put food on the table by expanding food budgets.

In closing, we strongly support HB101 allowing for the State of Maryland to implement Heat and Eat this year.

¹ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Maryland Food Supplement Program (December 3, 2018), https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_maryland.pdf.