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**HB 101 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Heat and Eat Program
House Appropriations Committee
Favorable
February 10, 2021**

Good afternoon Chairwoman Kelly and members of the Senate Finance Committee. I am Jim Campbell and I am the State President of AARP Maryland. As you may know, AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in Maryland, encompassing over 850,000 members. I represent AARP MD and its members in support of SB 913 **Human Services – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Heat and Eat Program**. We applaud the sponsors, Senators Cory McCray, Mary Washington and Clarence Lam for introducing this legislation to help increase food benefits for some of the state’s neediest citizens.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

As has been stated in testimony today, the Heat and Eat program is an existing federal aid program currently in about a dozen states that allows SNAP eligible residents, who also qualify for energy assistance, to receive additional food assistance under the SNAP program. A 2016 study by the Maryland Department of Human Resources, now called the Department of Human Services estimated that under the Heat and Eat provisions, 32,000 Marylanders would receive an additional \$59 a month of SNAP benefits.

As the pandemic began last spring, Maryland Hunger Solution reported that SNAP applications rose by 600%. As of last June, 800,000 Marylanders were enrolled in SNAP, an increase of 14 % over the previous year. In Baltimore City, more than a quarter of households are enrolled in SNAP.

A recent study by the Food and Research Action reported that Maryland has the nation’s 7th highest food insecurity rate among 50-59-year hold’s (33.89%) and 8th highest food insecurity rate among those 60+ (18.69%).

The SNAP program has been shown to be effective in reducing insecurity for older adults who have limited resources to spend on necessities such as food, housing, medical costs and utilities.

Real Possibilities

Participation in SNAP by older Americans, who are less likely to give up their medicine for food, has been linked to reduced hospital and nursing home admissions, resulting in millions of dollars in taxpayer savings.

AARP is supporting SB 913 to reduce food insecurity and improve food access to older Maryland citizens. AARP through our advocacy, programs, and services, fight against discrimination, advocate for access to health care, and work to improve the lives of all people, especially those most vulnerable. As we consider this moment in time, it's clear, AARP will use its voice, resources, and trust in our brand to continue our fight for what is right so all people can live a life of dignity regardless of race, age, or income. This is why we support SB 913 the Heat and Eat Program.

We respectfully ask the committees to respectfully pass SB 913. If you have questions or comments please contact Tammy Bresnahan at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.