



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony in Support of HB456
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement
February 8, 2022

TO: The Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chair; The Honorable Mark S. Chang, Vice Chair; and
Members of the House Appropriations Committee
FROM: Tiffany Jones, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

On behalf of the Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County's federally designated anti-poverty group, we strongly support HB456. Increasing access to food and nutrition programs and expanding the assistance provided by these programs have been longstanding priorities for our board because food insecurity remains a serious issue in our community. About 8.6% of Montgomery County's population is food insecure, meaning that they experience a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in the household to live an active, healthy life.¹ At the same time, Montgomery County also has a very low SNAP participation rate. Of the Montgomery County residents who are eligible for SNAP, only 36% participate in the program.² This issue is not unique to Montgomery County; many other Maryland counties have very low SNAP participation rates, despite their high rates of food insecurity.

There are many reasons that people, especially seniors, the population addressed in this bill, do not apply for SNAP, such as lack of transportation to eligibility offices, lack of technology to apply online, language barriers, and lack of awareness. When seniors face these barriers and then realize that the minimum monthly SNAP benefit they would be eligible for is just \$30, they may choose not to apply because it is simply not worth the trouble. HB456 would increase the minimum amount to \$45 and would reduce the minimum eligibility age for seniors to 60. These changes would encourage more seniors to apply for SNAP, thus reducing food insecurity among older members of our community. As well, the increased benefit each month will help participants cover the cost of groceries, which has increased substantially in recent months.³

We strongly recommend passage of HB456 and we encourage the Committee to explore other policies that will increase participation in SNAP and provide added support for Marylanders facing food insecurity.

¹ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/>

² <https://www.mdhungersolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/analysis-snap-participation-by-md-county.pdf>

³ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-price-outlook/summary-findings/>