



HOMELESS PERSONS REPRESENTATION PROJECT, INC.

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SUPPORT

HB 456 – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement House Appropriations Committee, Tuesday, February 8, 2022

Testimony of Michelle Madaio, Director – Economic Justice, HPRP

The Homeless Persons Representation Project, Inc. (HPRP) is a non-profit civil legal services organization that provides free legal representation to people who are experiencing homeless or at risk of homelessness on legal issues that will lead to an end to homelessness. HPRP regularly represents individuals and families in accessing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits through administrative appeals and advocacy.

HB 456 would reduce hunger among adults 60 and older in Maryland by increasing the minimum SNAP benefit from \$30 to \$45. The link between food insecurity and poor health outcomes is well documented. Increasing the minimum SNAP benefit means people experiencing food insecurity will have greater ability to purchase more groceries and more nutritious foods.¹ In fact, SNAP participants shared in interviews that a higher SNAP benefit results in greater financial ability to purchase fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins.² Increased purchasing of food will also positively impact Maryland’s economy: research on SNAP spending shows that increases to the SNAP benefit have a multiplier effect by generating more income for food production, distribution, marketing, and sales.³

The increase to the minimum SNAP benefit under HB 456 would incentivize more older adults living in poverty to apply for SNAP. HPRP has met many low-income Marylanders who are eligible for SNAP but who do not access the benefit when they would only qualify for the minimum amount. The time and onerous application process can deter many people from completing the application when the benefit is so low. Many older adults are living with disabilities and the number of trips back and forth to the local Department of Social Services offices on public transportation, long wait times, and paperwork simply make the process too cumbersome to complete for the minimum benefit. An increase to the minimum benefit would likely result in more older adults utilizing the SNAP program.

HPRP strongly urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 456. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Michelle Madaio (mmadaio@hprplaw.org).

1 Patricia M. Anderson, Kristin F. Butcher, “The Relationships Among SNAP Benefits, Grocery Spending, Diet Quality, and the Adequacy of Low-Income Families’ Resources,” Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, (June 2016) *available at* <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/6-14-16fa.pdf>

2 USDA, “SNAP Food Security In-Depth Interview Study, Final Report,” Nutrition Assistance Program Report Series, (March 2013) *available at* <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/SNAPFoodSec.pdf>

3 Canning, Patrick and Brian Stacy, “The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Economy: New Estimates of the SNAP Multiplier,” ERR-265, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, July 2019, *available at* <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/93529/err-265.pdf?v=8010.7>