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HB 456
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement
Hearing of the House Appropriations Committee
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1:00 PM

SUPPORT

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Health Rights Project supports policies and practices that promote the overall health of Marylanders struggling to make ends meet, with the explicit goal of promoting strategies that work to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes. **PJC strongly supports HB 456**, which would increase the minimum State-provided supplemental benefit under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program from \$30 to \$45. It would also lower the minimum age for eligibility for the supplemental benefit from 62 to 60.

SNAP is important to helping low-income older adults in attaining food security. However, SNAP is also associated with improved health outcomes. A recent research study of over 60,000 low-income seniors in Maryland found that seniors are less likely to be admitted to nursing homes and hospitals compared to their low-income non-participating counterparts, resulting in reduced healthcare costs.¹ As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and declaration of a federal public health emergency, SNAP participants receive the maximum allotment for their household. For a household of one older adult, this is \$250 a month, including the emergency allotments. However, once the emergency allotments end, households could see their benefit decrease to \$30 a month and it is anticipated that this change would impact many older adults as they may have other income sources such as Social Security. With rising food costs, older adults would likely struggle to make ends meet. By raising the minimum benefit from \$30 to \$45, HB 456 is a proactive measure to ease the transition from emergency allotments for older adults. Further, lowering the age of eligibility for the State-provided supplemental benefit would allow more older adults struggling to make ends meet to attain food security.

¹ Steven Carlson & Brynne Keith-Jennings, *SNAP Is Linked with Improved Nutritional Outcomes and Lower Health Care Costs* (2018), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-is-linked-with-improved-nutritional-outcomes-and-lower-health-care>.

For these reasons, the Public Justice Center urges the committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for **HB 456**. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Ashley Black at 410-625-9409 x 224 or blacka@publicjustice.org.