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Prince George's County

Appropriations Committee

*Vice Chair*  
Health and Social Services  
Subcommittee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Appropriations Committee**  
**Bill Hearing**  
**Tuesday, February 8, 2022**  
**HB 456- Testimony in Support**

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang and fellow Appropriations Committee Members:

Today I am introducing **HB 456** to address food insecurity for our most vulnerable seniors by amending our state supplemental for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP. This proposal would reflect federal and economic changes over the last six years since we first established a SNAP supplement for our older population. These much needed changes will help to alleviate hunger and improve the well-being of our older population as adequate nutrition is crucial to maintaining good physical and mental health .

- **HB 456** would build on a 2016 initiative to help vulnerable older adults and not only increases the SNAP minimum benefit for older adults from \$30 to \$45, but also lowers the qualifying age from 62 to 60.
- In 2016 the General Assembly prioritized the need to provide a state-funded supplement to ensure the SNAP minimum benefit for anyone 62 years of age and older was no less than \$30 a month. The increase was a doubling of the then federal minimum of \$15 a month to \$30 a month.
- The current federal minimum benefit is now \$20 a month, which should compel us to increase our state SNAP supplement to a minimum of \$45 dollars a month- just slightly over a dollar a day for those seniors who qualify for a minimum benefit. It is also now time to lower the qualifying age from 62 to 60 so we capture those older adults who are on fixed incomes and face food insecurity.

**SNAP Eligibility –**

- To qualify for SNAP as an older adult, one must be earning an income at or less than 165% of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL), which is the highest threshold of income level one can have in order to qualify for SNAP.
- For a household of one, that is a monthly total income of \$1,771 or less. For a household of two, that is \$2,396 or less.
- For older adults solely on Social Security and/or a Pension, they often sit near that qualifying line and are clearly in need of assistance for the most basic need we all have – food.

**SNAP During COVID**

- Since April 2020, the federal COVID relief provided emergency SNAP allotments to all SNAP recipients, which ensured a maximum allotment based on household size. For a household of one, that is \$250 a month to help put food on the table.

- However, the fiscal 2023 budget overview confirms that pre pandemic levels of economic stability have not been restored for thousands of Maryland families, especially our most vulnerable.
- The federal Covid funding for SNAP, which continue through this month (Feb. 2022), will subsequently require month to month applications for continued funding but this does not provide the program stability that is needed.
- It should be noted that while these federal allotments are in place, the state has not had to contribute any supplemental benefits to older adults and has been able to save the \$5.7 million allocated in the prior budgets for this population.

#### **Estimates of Impact –**

- Recently, the Governor announced that the budget includes a state supplemental SNAP increase for those 62 and over to \$40 a month for the upcoming fiscal year.
- The Governor’s office estimates that there are currently 27,000 older adults over age 62 who would qualify to receive the monthly increase.
- A study from the Food Research and Action Center reported that **Maryland has the 8th highest food insecurity rate in the nation for those 60 and older.**
- Providing an additional boost to older adults who are struggling can help cut this alarmingly high rate.
- Continuing rising food prices will hurt those on the lower end of the economic ladder the hardest. IRI Research data reported in the Dec. 27 *Wall Street Journal* predicted that food prices will continue to increase by as much as 5% in 2022. For anyone who regularly does grocery shopping this dramatic increase in the cost of purchasing food is evident.

#### **Economic Impact –**

- Based on a report from the [National Grocers Association](#), the economic impact of SNAP in Maryland generated \$117 million dollars in the grocery industry and related industries.
- While SNAP purchases are not subject to sales taxes, sales helped generate additional tax activity at the federal, state and local levels. SNAP sales at the grocery store level were responsible for \$17.3 million in state and local tax revenues and \$17.6 million in federal tax receipts.
- The USDA Economic Research Service reports that every \$1 invested in SNAP generates [up to \\$1.80 of economic activity](#).
- A 2020 study done by the **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**, found that SNAP benefits are one of the fastest impacts on the economy because the money is quickly injected back into the economy. Additionally 80 percent of SNAP benefits are redeemed within two weeks of receipt and 97 percent are spent within a one month period of time.
- Every SNAP dollar a low-income family receives enables the family to spend an additional dollar on food, shelter or transportation.
- This SNAP increase is a “win win” in helping those in need while helping to boost Maryland’s economy.
- As noted in the objectives of the **Human Rights Council of the United Nations**, we all must work to “ensure the realization of the right to food as an essential human right.”
- I urge a favorable report on **HB 456**
- **Supporters of HB 456 include the following offices and organizations:**

Congressman David Trone (MD-06)  
Maryland Hunger Solutions  
Manna Food Center  
Maryland Food Bank  
AARP Maryland  
Capital Area Food Bank  
No Kid Hungry Maryland  
Fair Farms Campaign of Waterkeepers Chesapeake  
Maryland Nonprofits  
Prince George's County Food Equity Council  
Baltimore Jewish Council  
Maryland Center on Economic Policy  
Maryland Retailers Association  
Montgomery County Food Council  
Homeless Persons Representation Project  
Healthcare for the Homeless  
Marylanders Against Poverty  
Public Justice Center  
Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland  
Critical Issues Forum  
Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network