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HB 456

March 29, 2022

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director, Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 456 – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 456.

HB 456 addresses the critical issue of food insecurity among older adults by providing a State supplemental benefit under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (also known as SNAP) by increasing the minimum total monthly benefit from \$30 to \$40.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Baltimore City saw an increase in food needs among older adults. As of January 31, 2022, the City has provided nearly 3 million meals and over 28,000 grocery boxes to older adults in need of food assistance. From June 2020 through December 2021, SNAP participation among older adults increased by 1,500 participants. As of December 2021, of the 174,114 Baltimore City residents on SNAP, 17,827 are older adults. The City anticipates a continued need to provide food assistance to older adults in the coming years and increasing minimum benefits will support this need.

The amount of SNAP each household receives is usually variable based on income threshold and household size. However, through the Congressional COVID-19 relief packages, SNAP allocations increased to provide the maximum benefits for each household based only on size. Currently a household of one can receive a maximum allotment of \$250. Eventually these emergency allotments will end and many older adults will see a significant drop in their SNAP benefits. For some older adults, this could drop down to just \$30 a month. Many older adults rely on SNAP to supplement their food budgets and an increase in the minimum benefit can offset this sharp decline.

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Participation in SNAP has also been shown to significantly improve low-income seniors' chances of living independently in the community as well as avoid hospitalization.¹ Specifically, a \$10 increase in monthly SNAP benefits reduced the odds of nursing home admissions and significantly reduced the odds of hospital admission and emergency department use. Additionally, giving SNAP to non-SNAP participants was associated with nursing home savings of \$34 million and an inpatient hospital savings of \$19 million. An increase in minimum benefits not only strengthens food security but can potentially reduce Medicare and Medicaid costs.

HB 456 aligns with the work Baltimore City is currently doing to ensure that older adults have access to food resources and are able to age in place.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on House Bill 456.

¹ <https://bdtrust.org/Policy-Research-Brief--July-2018.pdf>