



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

Testimony in Support of HB111

**Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and
Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment
House Health and Government Operations Committee
February 7, 2023**

Dear Chair Pena Melnyk, Vice-Chair Kelly, and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee,

My name is JD Robinson. I am the Program Coordinator for SNAP of Maryland Hunger Solutions, a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to end hunger in Maryland by improving participation in the federal nutrition programs. Maryland Hunger Solutions strongly supports House Bill 111 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment.

This bill has several key provisions, including: automatically granting Medicaid eligibility to children and adults enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); eliminating the paperwork currently required for SNAP recipients in Maryland to renew their Medicaid benefits; automatically enrolling seniors into SNAP if they qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI); streamlining utility assistance enrollment; and expanding access to electricity assistance for low-income families.

Based on [Census Bureau data for 2021](#), automatically granting Medicaid eligibility to SNAP recipients would help over 60,000 uninsured Marylanders get the health coverage they need, including 23,000 Black Marylanders and 28,000 Latinos. In this way, the bill would not only dramatically reduce the number of Maryland residents without healthcare coverage but also advance health equity. Likewise, eliminating the Medicaid re-enrollment requirement for SNAP recipients (which would impact over half a million Maryland residents) and automatically enrolling seniors qualified for SSI in SNAP would reduce the time burden associated with filling out multiple applications, increase access to Medicaid and SNAP, and generate administrative cost savings for state.

This bill will also advance an existing program available to SNAP recipients, Heat & Eat. The Heat & Eat program provides a boosted SNAP benefit for households that receive SNAP, receive energy assistance, and pay their utilities through their rent. The effects of the Heat & Eat program have not yet been felt by Maryland families as SNAP emergency allotments have maximized their benefits, but those provisions are ending in March 2023 and hundreds of thousands will see drastically reduced benefits. Ensuring that all SNAP families that are also categorically eligible for energy assistance receive both programs can help provide additional support to their SNAP benefits at a time when they are needed.



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Our on-the-ground experience as an authorized SNAP outreach agency for the state of Maryland has given us a unique perspective on this issue. The increased demand for additional assistance programs such as energy and healthcare is reflected in the number of callers on our toll-free hotline requesting referrals or information for these programs. Of the 400-500 calls we field per month, nearly a quarter ask for information on energy, heat, or medical assistance. We believe that providing streamlined pathways to these programs will improve the health and nutrition of thousands of Marylanders.

In conclusion, we urge a favorable report for HB 111. Thank you for your time.