

Julia Lemp, Advocacy and Public Policy Specialist, Capital Area Food Bank
HB0111 – Categorical Eligibility and Medicaid
Health and Government Operations Committee
Hearing Date 2/7/2023 at 3pm
Testimony of SUPPORT

Dear Chairwoman Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Capital Area Food Bank, we offer our support for HB0111 to require the Maryland Department of Health to establish an Express Lane Eligibility Program to enroll individuals in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and the Maryland Children's Health Program based on eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The Capital Area Food Bank serves over 200,000 food insecure residents in the two largest counties in Maryland, Prince George's and Montgomery. Last year, we distributed over 23 million meals to Maryland clients through a partner network of 138 nonprofit organizations and many additional direct distribution sites. However, we strongly believe that food alone will not address food insecurity, and we are thoughtfully engaging in innovative means to address the root causes of hunger. Throughout Maryland, we partake in partnerships and programs that leverage food to facilitate upward economic mobility and take food as medicine approaches to achieve positive health outcomes for our clients.

HB0111 addresses a critical intersection between hunger and health. Our clients, many of whom utilize SNAP to help feed their families, are also facing health disparities and inequities. Individuals in food-insecure households have a much higher rate of developing heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and higher BMI's than their food-secure counterparts. In fact, they are 18 percent more likely to develop ongoing, chronic health conditions according to the USDA. These health challenges carry significant individual economic costs, due to increased healthcare spending and lost earnings. Additionally, low-income individuals may be working jobs that do not even offer healthcare benefits, or they may face preventative costs to obtaining healthcare for themselves and their families.

Removing barriers to healthcare access for low-income families, such as allowing SNAP eligibility to confer eligibility for the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and the Maryland Children's Health Program, will put our state one step closer to achieving health equity for all Marylanders.

We strongly encourage a favorable report on HB0111, and appreciate your consideration. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.