



Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network

MSCAN

AARP Maryland

Alzheimer's
Association,
Maryland Chapters

Baltimore Jewish
Council

Catholic Charities

Central Maryland
Ecumenical Council

Church of the Brethren

Episcopal Diocese of
Maryland

Housing Opportunities
Commission of
Montgomery County

Jewish Community
Relations Council of
Greater Washington

Lutheran Office on
Public Policy in
Maryland

Maryland Association of
Area Agencies on Aging

Maryland Catholic
Conference

Mental Health
Association of Maryland

Mid-Atlantic LifeSpan

National Association of
Social Workers,
Maryland Chapter

Presbytery of Baltimore

The Coordinating
Center

MSCAN Co-Chairs:
Carol Lienhard
Sarah Mücke
410-542-4850

HB 111

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

SUPPORT

The Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network (MSCAN) is a statewide coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, faith-based and mission-driven organizations that supports policies that meet the housing, health and quality of care needs of Maryland's low and moderate-income seniors.

MSCAN supports HB 111, which requires the Department of Health and Department of Human Services to streamline access to safety-net programs by auto-enrolling individuals in public benefits based on their eligibility for other safety-net programs.

Many of our seniors are on fixed incomes and struggle with meeting their basic needs. Nearly one in five low-income seniors in Maryland struggles with hunger, resulting in Maryland having the 8th highest food insecurity rate among low-income seniors.¹ Tragically, at the same time, older adults are one of the fastest growing demographics of people experiencing homelessness. The pandemic has only exacerbated these issues, as seniors struggle to afford food, housing, medicines, and other basic necessities amongst rising costs of inflation.

Automatically enrolling low-income seniors in benefits they are eligible for reduces the technological and accessibility barriers many seniors face trying to access public benefits. The process for applying for public benefits is complex and cumbersome to navigate, generally requiring access to technology as well as reliable transportation, which many low-income older adults struggle to obtain. There is also a fear of stigma associated with receiving public assistance, and a lack of knowledge on how to receive benefits.² Streamlining public benefits eligibility by allowing seniors who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to be automatically enrolled in other benefits will improve the health and safety of low-income older adults struggling to make ends meet.

For the reasons stated above, MSCAN urges a favorable report on HB 111.
Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Maryland Hunger Solutions. 2019. Senior Hunger in Maryland.

http://mdhungersolutions.org/pdf/Senior_hunger_fact_sheet_OFFICIAL.pdf

² Benefits Data Trust. 2022. New Research Shows Ways to Reduce Stigma Among Older Adults of Accessing Benefits.
<https://bdtrust.org/new-research-shows-ways-to-reduce-stigma-among-older-adults-of-accessing-benefits-1/>