



March 6, 2024

COMMITTEE: House Appropriations Committee

BILL: HB 543 – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Seniors – State Supplement

POSITION: Support

The Horizon Foundation is the largest independent health philanthropy in Maryland. We are committed to a Howard County free from systemic inequities, where all people can live abundant and healthy lives.

The Foundation is pleased to support HB 543 – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Seniors – State Supplement. If individuals who are at least 62 years old on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program receive a federally funded benefit under \$75 per month, this bill would require the state to provide a supplement to increase the total benefit to \$75 per month, up from \$40.

Like other communities across the state, Howard County older adults and their families have felt the pain of rising food costs and an increasingly high cost of living. Though we are known as an affluent county, our lower- and middle-income families – particularly those of color – are at risk of, or are already experiencing, food insecurity. In fact, during the Foundation’s recent strategic planning and community engagement process, older adults with lower incomes reported that nutrition insecurity and affordability were among their top challenges to living in our community. HB 543 would give these residents a much-needed financial boost and help fight hunger and food insecurity in Howard County.

By reducing health inequities, we believe all people will be able to live abundant and healthy lives. To help achieve that vision, we must ensure that healthy food is accessible and affordable to everyone in our community.

For this reason, the Horizon Foundation **SUPPORTS HB 543** and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

Thank you for your consideration.

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