



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 543

DATE: March 6, 2024

SPONSOR: Delegate Henson, et al.

ASSIGNED TO: Appropriations

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POSITION: FAVORABLE

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Seniors – State Supplement

House Bill 543 increases the amount of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefit that the State is required to provide for a household that includes an individual who is at least 62 years old from \$40 to \$75 per month.

A legislative priority of Montgomery County for the 2024 Session is to support legislation that aligns with the advocacy recommendations made in the Montgomery County Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger¹ including increasing food financial benefits.

While many families receive direct benefits (like SNAP or WIC), these benefits at current rates are often insufficient to cover their actual needs. According to the Food Research and Action Center, “the greatest shortcoming of SNAP is that benefits for most households are not enough to get through the entire month without hunger or being forced to sacrifice nutrition quality.” This is confirmed by the Montgomery County Resident Survey: the Survey found that, among respondents (n=1,315), 63% used both food assistance programs (e.g., food distribution and food benefit). For many residents, food benefits alone at current levels do not meet their needs.

Additionally, in Montgomery County, hunger is a buying power problem. Residents appreciate the assistance offered through community and school-based food distribution programs, yet they also shared concerns about the quality and cultural appropriateness of the products offered. Their preference (according to resident survey data) is to have increased food benefit amounts.

House Bill 543 would ensure that households with people over age 62 receive direct food benefits at an increased amount. Providing food insecure households with extra money to purchase the food they want from the local grocer they prefer is the most dignified, equitable, and efficient way to support them. Montgomery County respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 543.

¹¹ https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ofs/Files/StrategicPlan2023_rev9signed.pdf