

## **House Bill 694**

**Governor's Office for Children - Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions,  
Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Grant Program (ENOUGH Act of 2024)  
House Appropriations Committee  
House Health and Government Operations Committee  
February 28, 2024**

### **Position: SUPPORT**

House Bill 694 creates a competitive grant program that appropriates \$15 million to distribute to communities that have identified their own plan to address poverty by targeting root causes and generational challenges that perpetuate a cycle of poverty through closing gaps in sources of existing funding.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that 1 in 3 Marylanders is at risk of food insecurity. A person who is food insecure does not have consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day, and this problem persists in every area of the state. There are also communities and populations that are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, including communities of color, families with children, and older adults. The drivers of food insecurity are complex and often include additional factors such as low income, lack of reliable transportation, and access to healthcare.

To end food insecurity in Maryland, the root causes of hunger, including housing instability, lack of adequate healthcare access in communities, and limited transportation options, must be addressed. This new pot of money authorized by HB 694 will utilize place-based interventions in communities that suffer these problems and have high rates of child poverty to help break the generational cycle in the locations that need it most. These communities, like hunger, are not restricted by borders, and are found across the state – whether in urban, suburban, or rural areas. With around 2 million Marylanders forced to choose between putting food on the table and paying their bills, no one in these communities should be left behind.

Targeted, supplemental investments into communities with ongoing anti-poverty projects would be beneficial in reducing need in Maryland as inflation and rising food costs continue to impact everyday Marylanders. The Maryland Food Bank appreciates authorizing this new grant program that will allow local governments, nonprofits, and community organizations to continue and expand their work in poverty reduction and considers this bill a meaningful step towards eliminating the root causes of hunger.

For these reasons, the Maryland Food Bank respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 694.