



**Testimony in Support of HB0666
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement
House Appropriations Committee
February 6, 2024**

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Chang, and Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

On behalf of the Anne Arundel County Food Bank (AACFB), I respectfully request a favorable report for House Bill 0666 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement, to increase the minimum SNAP benefit in Maryland to \$95 a month.

Since 1986, AACFB has worked to alleviate food insecurity in Anne Arundel County by partnering across our community to collect and distribute nourishing food to our neighbors in need. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of our food bank and that of our peers, the need for food assistance across our county and throughout our state remains alarmingly high. According to Feeding America, as of 2021, 600,970 (9.7%) Marylanders are food insecure, meaning that these individuals do not have access to sufficient food of adequate quality to meet their basic needs. The high cost of food and housing, coupled with the need for improved public transportation and access to affordable childcare, places a heavy burden on our neighbors as they try to feed their families.

During the pandemic, a multitude of waivers and flexibilities provided greater access to households to apply for and maintain SNAP benefits, as well as a maximization of monthly benefit amounts through Emergency Allotments. This waiver provided an increased benefit corresponding to household size for all eligible SNAP families and individuals. Under this waiver, a household of one saw no less than \$281 a month and a household of four no less than \$973 a month. This ended in March 2023, with all households seeing a decrease in their monthly allotments with some falling to as little as \$23 a month, the federal minimum.

Since the decrease, the Anne Arundel County Food Bank, through its network of 76 pantry partners operating across 115 distribution locations, has experienced a surge in requests for food assistance. Currently, we are averaging more than 48,000 instances of service monthly. This is 13% more than this time last year.

With Congress unable to pass a Farm Bill in 2023, states have begun taking action to help remedy this hunger cliff. The District of Columbia recently passed and funded Give SNAP A Raise, which will increase each SNAP household's monthly benefit by 10%. New Jersey increased the minimum benefit for households to \$50 in 2021 and further increased it to \$95 a month in 2023. Maryland can and should join other states in addressing SNAP benefit adequacy by boosting the minimum benefit.



We believe in the attainability of food security for all and a food system that prioritizes equity and justice above all else. Enacting this legislation shows a commitment from the state to provide for people impacted most by food insecurity and supplements a proven program that can lift families out of poverty.

In conclusion, the Anne Arundel County Food Bank urges a favorable report for HB 0666.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leah Aiello Paley". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Leah Aiello Paley, LMSW
Chief Executive Officer
Anne Arundel County Food Bank