

## Testimony - House Bill 543 - Increasing Minimum Supplemental SNAP Benefit for Maryland Seniors

The Empowerment Team

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Delegate Ben Barnes Chair

Appropriations Committee

FAVORABLE



Dear Appropriations Committee members, we are writing to express *our strong support for House Bill 543*, which aims to increase the minimum supplemental SNAP benefit for Maryland seniors from \$40 to \$75 per month. This legislation is critical for ensuring that our older adults have access to the nutrition they need to maintain their health and well-being.

The Empowerment Team has been working on older adult issues in Baltimore City since the start of the covid 19 pandemic. In this capacity we are acutely aware of precarious financial situation faced by many of our older adults. We believe it is our collective responsibility to prioritize the welfare of these residents, as many of whom have contributed significantly to the well-being of our communities throughout their lives.

The current minimum supplemental SNAP benefit of \$40 per month is insufficient to meet the basic nutritional needs of our older adults, especially considering the rising costs of food, property taxes and general cost of living. House Bill 543, by proposing to increase the minimum benefit to \$75 per month, demonstrates a commitment to addressing this inadequacy and providing a more realistic level of support for our older population.

With covid-era programs coming to an end, our older adults will again be under enormous pressure to maintain their quality of life. This increase would come at a crucial time as resources will again be limited.

I urge the members of the Appropriations Committee to support House Bill 543 and contribute to the well-being of Maryland seniors. This legislation aligns with our values as a compassionate and caring community, and it is a practical step towards addressing the nutritional and housing needs of our aging population.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I trust that you will consider the positive impact that House Bill 543 can have on the lives of Maryland older adults.

Sincerely,

John Kern and Sarah Mathews, co chairs of The Empowerment Team