



Testimony to the House Appropriations Committee
HB543: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Seniors – State Supplement
Position: Favorable

February 21, 2024

The Honorable Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
Appropriations Committee
Room 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Cc: Members, Appropriations Committee

Economic Action Maryland (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) is a people-centered movement to expand economic rights, housing justice, and community reinvestment for working families, low-income communities, and communities of color. Economic Action Maryland provides direct assistance today while passing legislation and regulations to create systemic change in the future.

Economic Action Maryland supports HB543, which would establish an increased minimum benefit of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funds to households with older adults over the age of 62 from \$40 a month to \$75 a month.

In the state of Maryland, a concerning statistic reveals that only 53% of eligible older adults over the age of 60 are participating in the SNAP program. This low amount of participation is encouraged further by the inadequate minimum monthly benefit of \$40 for households supporting older adults. This extremely low amount of support falls significantly short of meeting the basic nutritional needs of seniors, which has been linked to increased risks of health issues such as obesity, diabetes, and heightened hospitalization rates, all of which could be decreased with increased access to proper nutritional values.

Recognizing this, we believe that increasing the minimum benefit from \$40 to \$75 would not only encourage greater participation in the SNAP program but also alleviate the food insecurity faced by older adults, as well as contribute to the stimulation of local economies as recipients would have additional resources to spend on food and other necessities.

Supporting HB543 ensures that older adults facing food insecurity receive the nutrition and assistance they rightfully deserve. By increasing the minimum amount of SNAP assistance households with older adults receive, food insecurity and lack of SNAP participation among older adults would be decreased overall.

For these reasons we support HB543 and ask for a favorable response from the committee.

Sincerely,
Zoe Gallagher, Policy Associate