



**INFORMATIONAL TESTIMONY ON HB 543**  
**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Seniors - State Supplement**  
**House Appropriations Committee**  
**March 6, 2024**

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

HB 543 aims to provide additional state funding to the existing supplement for older adults on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). It would include additional funding to increase the existing \$40 SNAP minimum to \$75 a month while maintaining the age of eligibility for the supplement at 62 years old and older.

As a statewide, non-partisan, nonprofit working to end hunger in Maryland, Maryland Hunger Solutions strives to overcome existing barriers to state and federal nutrition assistance programs and create self-sustaining connections between Maryland residents and nutritious foods.

In 2015, Maryland Hunger Solutions championed legislation for the original SNAP supplement for older adults, from the then federal minimum of \$15 a month to \$30 a month. This was raised again in 2021 to \$40 a month, but at the time had minimal impact as the state was currently receiving the emergency allotments waiver that allowed for a boosted SNAP benefit to all eligible households.

Last year, SNAP lost a multitude of waivers and flexibilities that provided greater access to households to apply and maintain benefits, including Emergency Allotments. Under this waiver, a household of one received no less than \$281 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. This mostly impacted older adult households, as they have higher income limits for eligibility and often have higher incomes due to Social Security and pensions.

There is currently legislation being introduced this session to increase the minimum benefit for all Marylanders on SNAP to \$95 a month, HB666/SB35. This increase would not only assist older adult households, but working families and individuals who receive less than \$95 a month. This increase would be in step with New Jersey, who currently provides a \$95 a month minimum SNAP benefit as of March 2023.

Maryland Hunger Solutions appreciates the opportunity to inform the conversation around HB 543. We welcome the opportunity to work with legislators and the Department of Human Services to ensure that Marylanders have reliable access to healthy food year-round.