



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

**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,

My name is JD Robinson. I am the Program Coordinator for SNAP of Maryland Hunger Solutions, a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to end hunger in Maryland by improving participation in the federal nutrition programs. Maryland Hunger Solutions strongly supports House Bill 0666 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement, to increase the minimum SNAP benefit in Maryland to \$95 a month.

Last year, SNAP lost a multitude of waivers and flexibilities that provided greater access to households to apply and maintain benefits, as well as a maximization to 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.

The loss of emergency allotments not only affects households and individuals on SNAP, but the entire food system in the state. The amount of federal dollars coming into Maryland each month for SNAP dropped nearly \$70 million with the ending of emergency allotments. It is estimated for every \$1 provided through SNAP, \$1.50 is generated in the local economy. These estimates would calculate a loss of \$105 million in the economy every month and over \$1 billion annually.

Our on-the-ground experience as an authorized SNAP outreach agency for the state of Maryland has given us a unique perspective on this issue. We have fielded multiple calls on our toll-free hotline from families in distress as they attempted to navigate this sudden change. Older adults have said they are unable to support their doctor-recommended diets due to losing the extra benefits. More families have started to return to food pantries and slowly becoming overdue on utility and rent payments. All of this coinciding with inflation and record-high prices at the grocery store which has led us to a “hunger cliff.”

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.



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Enacting this legislation shows a commitment from the state to provide for those impacted most by food insecurity and supplement a proven program that can lift families out of poverty.

In conclusion, we urge a favorable report for HB 0666. Thank you for your time.