



February 1, 2024

2024 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY

HB0666: SNAP State Supplement

**BILL:** HB0666: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement

**COMMITTEE:** Appropriations

**POSITION:** Testimony in Support of House Bill 0666

**BILL ANALYSIS:** Repealing the minimum age that a member of a household must be for eligibility for a State-provided supplemental benefit under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; and increasing the amount of the supplemental benefit that the State must provide from \$40 to \$95.

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

The Takoma Park Silver Spring Food Co-op (TPSS) urges you to SUPPORT the SNAP State Supplement Bill, which will increase the minimum benefit available to residents enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to \$95.

As a community-owned grocery store that has been in business for 43 years in Takoma Park and Silver Spring, TPSS understands the importance of SNAP to our customers and community. As a retailer, SNAP offers our customers the dignity of choice in the types and quantities of foods they want to select. The sales from SNAP help to support our store operations and offer livable wages and benefits to our 45 staff members.

During the pandemic, SNAP was a lifeline to so many Maryland residents who were suddenly experiencing job loss or reduced hours leading to food insecurity. As a grocery store who partners with a local food assistance provider, Small Things Matter, we saw up close the long lines and need. Distributions at our store in 2020 and 2021 would regularly have lines of hundreds wrapping around the store. Before the pandemic, SNAP accounted for less than one percent of store sales. By 2022 thanks to increased investments in SNAP, sales had increased more than 600%, adding over \$300,000 in sales to the store.

When the federal public health emergency was ended in May of 2023, we saw a decline in SNAP sales across the store. After May 2023, there was an 18% decline in SNAP sales which comes to almost \$50,000 a year. Grocery retailers I have spoken with across the region have also seen declines in SNAP sales.

Enacting this legislation would help support Maryland residents and their ability to access healthy foods. It will support the local economy and give people dignity and choice when it comes to food. For these reasons, the Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op supports House Bill 0666 and urges a FAVORABLE REPORT for this bill.

For more information, please contact Mike Houston, General Manager, at the email and phone number below.

Sincerely,

Mike Houston, TPSS Co-op General Manager