

House Bill 543
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Seniors - State Supplement
Appropriation Committee
March 6, 2024
Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports HB 543, which raises the minimum monthly SNAP benefit for households with an individual aged 62 or older from \$40 to \$75.

For a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities.

As the second-largest human services provider in the state, Catholic Charities of Baltimore has been managing senior communities for over 40 years. Our senior community residents enjoy a variety of on-site services, including service coordinators available to assist them in accessing benefits and services in the surrounding community, as well as maintaining partnerships with healthcare and service providers within each building. **Through these services, we witness firsthand the struggles seniors face in meeting their basic needs.**

The need for increased food assistance for seniors is evident from the findings of Feeding America's "The State of Senior Hunger in America, 2019-2020" report, which revealed that a staggering 9.5% of adults aged 60 and older in Maryland faced the threat of hunger in the past 12 months, ranking our state an alarming 12th in the nation.¹ Providing seniors with increased financial resources for food not only addresses hunger but also alleviates the difficult choice between purchasing food and affording expensive prescriptions or essential doctor visits.

Exacerbating this issue is the rise in food expenses and grocery prices, which is outpacing the rate of inflation, placing a significant strain on individuals with fixed incomes. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Price Index for food purchased for consumption at home surged by a concerning 3.7% in the twelve-month period ending September 2023.² Seniors with limited financial resources are especially vulnerable to the impact of rising grocery prices, often encountering difficulties in purchasing nutritious foods or being forced to reduce their food consumption, resulting in food insecurity and malnutrition, which can have profound adverse effects on their health and overall quality of life.² This legislation aims to provide crucial support to Maryland's vulnerable senior population by increasing the minimum monthly SNAP benefit for households with seniors, thereby enhancing food security, promoting dignity, and ensuring access to adequate nutrition for an improved quality of life.

For these reasons, Catholic Charities urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 543.

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy

1. America's Health Ranking United Health Foundation . America's Health Rankings | AHR. America's Health Rankings. Accessed March 4, 2024. https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/food_insecurity_sr/MD
2. Senior Citizens and Rising Inflation Costs: What is Going Up? Life Care Services. Published December 28, 2023. Accessed March 4, 2024. <https://www.lifecareservices.com/insights-for-senior-living/insights-detail/senior-citizens-rising-inflation-costs#:~:text=Seniors%20on%20a%20tight%20budget>