

**Capital Area Food Bank**  
**Brian Alexander, Sr. Manager of Advocacy and Public Policy**  
**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB0035**  
**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement**  
**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee**  
**January 17, 2024**

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Dear Chairman Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

My name is Brian Alexander, and I am the Senior Manager of Advocacy and Public Policy at the Capital Area Food Bank. On behalf of the Capital Area Food Bank, I write to offer support for SB0035 – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement.

The Capital Area Food Bank has been a leader in the Washington, D.C. area’s hunger relief community for more than 44 years, serving residents of Northern Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties in Maryland. During our last fiscal year, we distributed nearly 29 million meals in those two Maryland counties alone through a vast network of partners and programs to help our neighbors keep food on their tables.

The pandemic continues to greatly impact our community, and the end of pandemic-era waivers and flexibilities for programs like SNAP have hit our clients particularly hard. The SNAP Emergency Allotments that were administered during the public health emergency provided a meaningful boost to all SNAP recipients, allowing families to continue to access food at local retailers amidst inflation and supply chain constraints.

Each year, the Capital Area Food Bank releases a Hunger Report – a comprehensive look at food insecurity across the food bank’s service area. When we surveyed SNAP recipients about the impact of the temporary boost to their benefits, more than 70% said that the increase had a major, positive impact on their household’s financial situation.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, when those waivers ended in March of last year, more than 75% of surveyed SNAP recipients indicated that it caused a major negative impact on their finances. More than 40% of respondents coped by seeking out free groceries while roughly one-third skipped or cut the size of their meals.

In an effort to respond to the loss of these waivers and flexibilities, some states have taken steps to utilize local funding to supplement minimum federal benefits. For example, New Jersey recently raised the minimum benefit floor for households to \$50/month in 2021 and \$95/month in 2023, ensuring all recipients have a minimum level of buying power to keep food on the table.

Given Maryland’s high cost of living, enacting this legislation would go a long way towards reducing food insecurity in the state and would allow recipients to focus additional financial resources on other basic needs. SNAP is a proven, effective program, and this legislation offers

the state an opportunity to tailor benefits to the demonstrated needs of residents and lift more Marylanders out of poverty.

In conclusion, we urge a favorable report for SB0035. Thank you for your time.