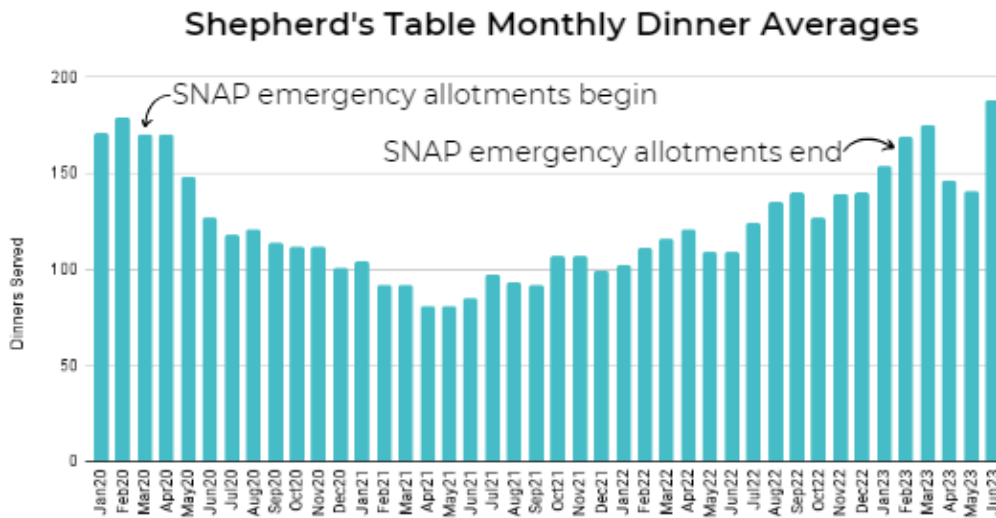




January 16, 2024

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

Shepherd's Table is a social services organization in Silver Spring that has provided hot, nutritious, free meals to the unhoused and low-income community since 1983. In 2023, we served a record number of meals compared to recent years and saw a noticeable increase in people seeking services at the end of the emergency allotment period.



Source: Shepherd's Table 2023

For many of our meal guests, SNAP was the only income they were receiving while trying to find work and housing. It also our meal gives guests more choices and the ability to get culturally competent food. While Shepherd's Table serves a wide range of cuisines, not everyone's preference can be met when serving over 150 individuals multiple times a day, and everyone deserves dignity and discretion in what food they choose to feed themselves and their families.

The recent changes in SNAP regulations have significantly impacted households and individuals, creating challenges not only for SNAP beneficiaries but also affecting the broader food system. Maryland Market Money increases the buying power of those using nutrition assistance benefits, but when the buying power is reduced for participants, this results in farmers having reduced sales, therefore taking away the incentive for farmers to continue to accept SNAP benefits. The loss of emergency allotments resulted in a considerable reduction in federal dollars entering Maryland, impacting our local economy by an estimated \$105 million each month and over \$1 billion annually. **For these reasons, Shepherd's Table supports SB 0035 to increase the minimum SNAP benefit.**

By enacting Senate Bill 0035, Maryland can demonstrate its commitment to addressing food insecurity and supporting a proven program that helps lift families out of poverty.



In conclusion, I respectfully urge your favorable consideration for SB 0035. Thank you for your time and dedication to addressing our state's critical issue of food insecurity.

Best,

Brenna Olson

Advocacy Coordinator

Shepherd's Table