



**Statement of the Maryland Federation of
National Active and Retired Federal Employees
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee Hearing, February 21, 2024
On Senate Bill 722 – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Seniors –
State Supplement**

(Position – FAV)

Good afternoon, Chair Guzzone and Vice-Chair Rosapepe and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee. My name is Robert M. Doyle and I am testifying on behalf of the State Legislative Committee of the Maryland Federation of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), representing approximately 317,000 federal annuitants and employees in Maryland. For the continuing benefit of our senior membership as well as all Maryland seniors, we support – and ask you for a favorable report on – Senate Bill 722 entitled Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – Seniors – State Supplement.

As we have heard, this Bill works as follows: for any household with at least one senior (a person over 62), their minimum SNAP benefit will be raised from \$40 to \$75.

SNAP is the federal government's largest program for fighting hunger and food insecurity. During the pandemic, Congress passed a coronavirus response law that temporarily increased the amount of financial assistance SNAP participants received -- the extra benefits were called Emergency Allotments or EAs. But in March 2023, a year ago, EAs ended and monthly SNAP benefits returned to prior levels based on the recipients' income and household size. The average recipient received \$90 less per month, and some larger households had benefits reduced by \$250 per month or more. But the minimum payment for an individual went from \$281 per month to \$23 per month.

Seniors were hit especially hard. According to a report from the Food Research and Action Center, the steepest cuts are felt by older adults who only qualify for the minimum SNAP benefit, the \$281 to \$23 fall-off. Research from AARP's Public Policy Institute, among households that participated in SNAP benefits, 8.7 million included at least one person age 50 or older. The sharp SNAP cuts and rising food prices from inflation were a one-two punch.

After the EAs ended, because of Maryland law, seniors in SNAP did at least receive the State minimum of \$40. From the Fiscal and Policy Note for SB 722, we know that between July and November 2023, there were approximately 29,368

average monthly recipients of the State supplemental SNAP benefit for households with a member who is at least age 62. An average monthly payment of \$15.30 was distributed to ensure these households received a total benefit of \$40 per month.

But we need to do better. We agree with organizations like Maryland Hunger Solutions that we need to take steps to reduce hunger and bolster the health and well-being of seniors, individuals and families across the state by boosting SNAP assistance to those who need it. The funds dispersed in SNAP are investments which persons spend in grocery stores and farmers markets and the like.

Beyond that, SNAP is of great help to those older Maryland seniors who sometimes have to choose between food and other essentials including expensive prescription drugs, utility bills and even rent.

NARFE support bills like this one that improve the quality of life for Maryland seniors so that they will stay in Maryland and can age in place with dignity and not leave for other states. Maryland NARFE asks respectfully for the Committee to give a favorable report to SB 722.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Robert M. Doyle
Vice-Chair, State Legislative Committee
MD Federation – NARFE
4226 Carvel Lane
Edgewater, MD 21037
Bdoyle47@verizon.net

H (410) 798-0079

C/Text (301) 693-1774
