



February 6, 2024

Attention: Members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony considering SB 98.

My name is Carla Schroyer, and I am the Director of Community Choice Pantry Services at Community Assistance Network. Community Assistance Network (CAN) is the designated anti-poverty organization serving all of Baltimore County, Maryland. Born from President Lyndon B. Johnson's war on poverty, and established in 1965, CAN's Mission is to work in partnership with the community to develop, operate, and support programs that reduce vulnerability and empower personal growth, dignity, stability, and self-sufficiency among people in Baltimore County experiencing economic challenges. We are part of a network of over one-thousand community action agencies and one of seventeen in Maryland. CAN provides programs to address food, housing, income security and self-sufficiency.

CAN is in support of Senate Bill 98 which calls for the Department of Housing and Community Development to conduct a Food Desert Study to analyze the location of food deserts in the State, make recommendations to reduce the number of food deserts in the State and determine the impact of food deserts on the local population and economy. As Director of Community Choice Pantry services, I see the impact that food insecurity has on the neighbors that we serve as evidenced in the neighbor impact statements that I have attached. Based on my daily interaction with Baltimore County neighbors, feedback from partner agencies and calls received indicating a need for pantry service, we know that there are countless other constituents with barriers to food access such as lack of transportation, lack of funds needed to travel to agencies like CAN, grocery or drug stores, and the absence of grocery stores, drug stores and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in close proximity to their residence.

Turner's Station is a community in Dundalk within CAN's 21222 service area that is a food desert. So far, this fiscal year CAN served 2058 households, 772 of which reside within the 21222-zip code. There is no grocery store or drug store in the community which makes it difficult for individuals to access healthy, nutritious food and medicine. There is a "dollar store" near the community, however, neighbors cannot access meat, eggs, cheese, milk, fresh produce, or other healthy food options. The cost of food when purchased at "dollar stores" is higher than if the same product was purchased at a grocery store. In addition to lack of access to healthy food and an increased cost, neighbors living in food deserts are not

afforded the same dignity of choice that neighbors who do not live in a food desert are afforded, especially when we consider religious and cultural observations.

Conducting a food desert study will empower communities to make lasting changes. Based on positive improvements that CAN has made to our facility and food access processes I have several recommendations. Provide access to healthy, nutritious food and medicine in communities where these resources are lacking. Over time we will observe improved physical health of the community members. Provide community members with the dignity of choice in their local grocery store so that they are afforded the opportunity to feel a sense of ownership and pride in their community. Over time I submit to you that in neighborhoods where these changes are made, we will observe improved mental health and a decline in crime. The findings of this study will also allow us to learn what additional resources such as community-based organizations are needed in food desert communities throughout Maryland and ultimately, agencies like CAN and those working on the front lines to alleviate poverty will be able to best serve the constituents of Maryland.

I urge you to vote in favor of SB 98. We can make a difference in the lives of all Marylanders and plant the seed of change.

12/18/23

Neighbor Impact Statement

CAN Food Pantry is a great asset and help to many in the community. I work with many in the community who are not able to afford many basic necessities. The food pantry not only offers food assistance, but help with household items as well. With the rising cost of living, a monthly visit to the food bank is the difference between balanced meals and less nutritious options. The pantry also offers a sense of dignity and ownership by allowing those in need to shop and select items. Overall, the pantry serves the community in many different capacities and is a beneficial resource to the many who use it.

Erin Ghant
LCSW-C

CAN FOOD Network has helped my family monthly with food when we ~~like~~ may have been a little short on food for that week. my kids enjoy the snacks that is always available whenever I go shop at CAN. The staff is also amazing. They will go out of their way to make sure that we receive the services that we need and they're always really nice. Thank you & for everything that y'all do to help families in need. :)

Dear Neighbors at Can,

I have been coming here for a few years now, since you were in the old ~~building~~ building. Your staff have been so kind & so sweet. And I have told my family & friends about Can. In these hard times, it's a such a blessing to know that there is a place to go when in need.

Sincerely,
Sandra

 Sandra

Merry Christmas!
+
A Happy New Year!

I'm very grateful for CAOS. I started coming during COVID before the store part was open. It was so helpful with getting food especially during that time. Now, that the store is open inside it's been really nice to be able to get whatever I want myself. Everyone is always nice and helpful. I'm very grateful for the ladies up front and Carla for all that they do to help keep this place going.

Thanks for having us,

Cherise Mearkle

12.18.2023

Dear Neighbor At CAN (Community Assistance Network)

I lost my job During COVID when my company shot down, After 28 year working for them.

I was 63 years old I have (Peter's my Disc Disorder)

of the spine,
Did not qualify for any med. assistance
unemployment ran out, Did not get any
Foodstamps.

I Thank God for CAN And the employees there, They did send me to the right place to get help, I apply for S.S.I, and got it

When I was walking bad They GAVE me a walker to keep!!

I again Thank God for the food and help from them.

Cynthia S. SWAPP,

Loretta Krausz

The food pantry helps me with food after my food stamps run out in the middle of the month. Also extra help from food pantry will holiday help. Believe just buying Christmas dinner and the little side dishes that are good to have. Thanks to all of you that helps. Merry Christmas

Loretta Krausz

416 982 41615

Michele Alston
201 Ash Ave.
Dundalk, MD 21222

CAN:

To whom it may concern,

I want to thank the Community Service Network for helping me and the members of my household with food, personal supplies, and clothes and household items. This support has made it easier to get through the month. Your staff is amazing. I thank God for this much needed support.

Sincerely,
Michele Alston - Agreimel

COO is very help ful

to me and my family

I enjoy coming

here the staff

are very nice here

front Desk are nice

I really like Kama

she is so sweets

THANKS YOU

FOR ALL OUR

HELP

Merry Christmas

and happy New Year.

See you next year

Valerie Moore

 (/REPORTS)

VISIT COUNTS REPORT

2023-10-01 - 2024-02-05

Date	Households Served	Individuals Served	New Households
10/1/2023	0	0	0
10/2/2023	30	50	5
10/3/2023	4	4	3
10/4/2023	23	47	3
10/5/2023	26	39	2
10/6/2023	29	40	4
10/7/2023	0	0	0
10/8/2023	0	0	0
10/9/2023	0	0	0
10/10/2023	24	34	5
10/11/2023	37	60	0
10/12/2023	18	37	1
10/13/2023	30	51	6
10/14/2023	0	0	0
10/15/2023	0	0	0
10/16/2023	30	49	4
10/17/2023	0	0	0
10/18/2023	30	50	4
10/19/2023	23	27	7
10/20/2023	34	51	6
10/21/2023	0	0	0
10/22/2023	0	0	0
10/23/2023	27	51	6
10/24/2023	2	2	0

Date	Households Served	Individuals Served	New Households
10/25/2023	43	64	7
10/26/2023	33	48	11
10/27/2023	41	70	4
10/28/2023	0	0	0
10/29/2023	0	0	0
10/30/2023	38	64	5
10/31/2023	7	7	2
11/1/2023	33	43	5
11/2/2023	24	43	3
11/3/2023	33	67	6
11/4/2023	0	0	0
11/5/2023	0	0	0
11/6/2023	34	57	10
11/7/2023	5	5	3
11/8/2023	30	51	7
11/9/2023	22	45	3
11/10/2023	0	0	0
11/11/2023	0	0	0
11/12/2023	0	0	0
11/13/2023	38	53	3
11/14/2023	6	6	3
11/15/2023	35	54	4
11/16/2023	36	61	9
11/17/2023	37	62	3
11/18/2023	0	0	0
11/19/2023	0	0	0
11/20/2023	45	61	2
11/21/2023	6	6	0
11/22/2023	28	47	3
11/23/2023	0	0	0
11/24/2023	0	0	0
11/25/2023	0	0	0

Date	Households Served	Individuals Served	New Households
11/26/2023	0	0	0
11/27/2023	46	77	5
11/28/2023	6	6	3
11/29/2023	34	59	4
11/30/2023	23	31	5
12/1/2023	20	41	1
12/2/2023	0	0	0
12/3/2023	0	0	0
12/4/2023	25	42	1
12/5/2023	6	6	1
12/6/2023	35	52	4
12/7/2023	20	23	6
12/8/2023	26	52	2
12/9/2023	0	0	0
12/10/2023	0	0	0
12/11/2023	26	46	2
12/12/2023	5	5	0
12/13/2023	45	81	7
12/14/2023	21	33	4
12/15/2023	34	47	5
12/16/2023	0	0	0
12/17/2023	0	0	0
12/18/2023	42	65	4
12/19/2023	5	5	0
12/20/2023	36	54	4
12/21/2023	25	43	5
12/22/2023	27	40	3
12/23/2023	0	0	0
12/24/2023	0	0	0
12/25/2023	0	0	0
12/26/2023	2	2	1
12/27/2023	31	53	1

Date	Households Served	Individuals Served	New Households
12/28/2023	20	31	0
12/29/2023	24	40	5
12/30/2023	0	0	0
12/31/2023	0	0	0
1/1/2024	0	0	0
1/2/2024	20	42	6
1/3/2024	12	19	3
1/4/2024	26	37	4
1/5/2024	35	56	5
1/6/2024	0	0	0
1/7/2024	0	0	0
1/8/2024	35	57	2
1/9/2024	1	1	0
1/10/2024	14	26	2
1/11/2024	24	36	3
1/12/2024	39	63	6
1/13/2024	0	0	0
1/14/2024	0	0	0
1/15/2024	0	0	0
1/16/2024	8	11	1
1/17/2024	16	23	1
1/18/2024	34	58	5
1/19/2024	0	0	0
1/20/2024	0	0	0
1/21/2024	0	0	0
1/22/2024	37	58	5
1/23/2024	6	6	1
1/24/2024	32	43	5
1/25/2024	25	35	3
1/26/2024	24	35	1
1/27/2024	0	0	0
1/28/2024	0	0	0

Date	Households Served	Individuals Served	New Households
1/29/2024	43	66	3
1/30/2024	5	5	2
1/31/2024	30	36	6
2/1/2024	13	19	4
2/2/2024	18	28	5
2/3/2024	0	0	0
2/4/2024	0	0	0
2/5/2024	36	63	4
Totals	2058	3263	299