



Critical Issues Forum
Advocacy for Social Justice

**TESTIMONY OF THE CRITICAL ISSUES FORUM: ADVOCACY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
ON FEBRUARY 8, 2024**

**BEFORE THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
ON SB 213
HUMAN SERVICES – FOOD SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM
(SUMMER SNAP FOR CHILDREN ACT)**

SUPPORT

Honorable Chair Senator Pamela Beidle, Vice-Chair Senator Katherine Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee:

The Critical Issues Forum: Advocacy for Social Justice ("CIF") was formed by a group of synagogues in Montgomery County, Maryland. It comprises Temple Beth Ami, Kol Shalom, and Adat Shalom and represents over 1,750 households and three denominations of Judaism: Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist. For the past several years, CIF has addressed food insecurity and gun violence issues in Maryland. CIF was actively involved in the legislative process that led to the enactment in 2019 of the Summer SNAP for Children Act (SB 218/HB 338)(Section 5-501-1 of the Annotated Code of Maryland).

The CIF supports the Maryland Department of Human Services' request to increase funding in the Summer SNAP for Children legislation, consistent with recent budget allocations. Maryland's Summer SNAP for Children is an innovative and efficient way to address the increase in hunger experienced by many low-income children during the summer when children lose access to school meals. By providing a modest benefit for food during the summer, Summer SNAP for Children will reduce hunger and allow school-aged children to have healthier diets.

Funding Summer SNAP for Children is the right thing to do. SNAP's impact on children lasts well beyond their childhood years, providing long-term benefits for health, education, and economic self-sufficiency.¹ Specifically, it will 1) benefit our children of all ages by having them healthier, 2) benefit school children by making them more prepared to learn in the fall, and 3) help Maryland by having a better-educated citizenry. Food insecurity is a real issue for children in Maryland. Food hardship experienced by Maryland families puts our children's physical, emotional, educational, and behavioral development at risk.

¹ Fact Sheet: White House Report Highlights New Research on SNAP's Effectiveness and the Importance of Adequate Food Assistance, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pressrelease/2015/wh-120815>

Last year, \$9.505 million was available for Summer SNAP based on \$5 million of state funds and \$4.5 million of county matches². This assisted more than 91 thousand children in the 14 counties that participated in Summer SNAP out of the 24 counties in Maryland. In sum, \$5 million is consistent with what was appropriated in the last session and is clearly warranted this year to help children. As the State of Maryland has recognized for many years, SNAP is critical in addressing hunger and food insecurity in our community. However, the \$5 million request should not be considered a cap as this amount, while helpful to many children, is far short of the need to help the more than 160,000 children eligible to receive Summer SNAP in those fourteen jurisdictions. The Department of Human Services has stated, "a budget of \$15.9 million [which would include the county match] would be required to serve all the children ages 5-18" in the 14 participating counties.³

Last but not least, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) notes that SNAP benefits not only help children but "also augment the incomes and spending of others (such as farmers, retailers, food processors, and food distributors, as well as their employees); this, in turn, has ripple effects for other parties."⁴ It will increase Maryland's business economy because, as reported by the USDA, each \$1 in SNAP generates \$1.79 in local economic activity.⁵ Consequently, with the State's \$5.0 million and the match by the counties of \$4.5 million (if similar to last year), Summer SNAP will provide direct food assistance of almost \$10 million and an economic multiplier of more than \$17 million to the State.

The Critical Issues Forum: Advocacy for Social Justice of Montgomery County, Maryland, respectfully requests a favorable report of Senate Bill 213, Summer SNAP for Children Act.

² Report On Children Receiving Benefits Through The Summer SNAP For Children Act (Summer Portion), Maryland Department of Human Services, Completed pursuant to the 2023 Joint Chairmen's Report, page 144-145, November 15, 2023: [https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/JCR/2023/2023_144-145_2023\(10\).pdf?emci=05617198-088c-ee11-8925-00224832e811&emdi=ea000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000001&ceid=](https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/JCR/2023/2023_144-145_2023(10).pdf?emci=05617198-088c-ee11-8925-00224832e811&emdi=ea000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000001&ceid=)

³ Id.

⁴ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/economic-linkages/>

⁵ Id.