



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 6, 2024

HB 666

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – State Supplement

House Appropriations Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of House Bill 666. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 666 would provide a state-subsidized increase to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to \$95 per month for individuals who receive less than that amount. This legislation also removes the requirement that individuals be at least 62 years of age to receive the state-funded supplemental increase.

The Church strongly supports the continuation of anti-poverty programs that address the basic needs of its poorest individuals and families, including those tackling food insecurity, affordable housing, and unemployment. In 2021, Pope Francis stressed in his message on World Food Day that, *“Our actions are our future. Better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life, underlines the need for concerted action to ensure that everyone has access to diets that ensure maximum environmental sustainability, and that are both adequate and affordable. Each of us has a role to play in transforming food systems for the benefit of people and the planet, and all of us can cooperate [...] for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements, and talents”* (Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, 14).

In Maryland, the MCC advocates for the protection of social safety net programs to promote the common good. Household and familial insecurity stemming from the instability and fluctuation of federal assistance programs is detrimental to a healthy society. When there is doubt as to where a next meal will come from, it is extremely difficult to focus on things such as the dignity of work or care for one's family. House Bill 666 would serve to provide continuing stability and dignity for those who cannot financially withstand losing such an important benefit as food assistance.

It is for these reasons that the Maryland Catholic Conference respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 666.

