



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 595

### State Lottery Fund – Laurel Race Course – Local Impact Aid

*Senate Budget and Taxation Committee*

March 6, 2025

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

The Anne Arundel County Food Bank (AACFB) strongly supports SB 595, which aims to provide \$500,000 in supplemental local impact aid to Anne Arundel County, Howard County, and the City of Laurel to meet the growing demand for supplemental food, medical assistance, and other vital services to support race track-based backstretch workers employed at Laurel Race Course and residents living in the 20724 postal zip code.

For the past 39 years, AACFB has provided critical services such as food, emergency supplies, and other necessities free of charge to our extensive network of partners and the neighbors we serve throughout Anne Arundel County. Last year, in collaboration with our 76 Network Partners, we distributed 4.1 million pounds of food and essential supplies like baby diapers and feminine hygiene products, including 1.3 million pounds of fresh produce and lean proteins.

Due to increasing housing costs, fluctuating food prices, and the expiration of pandemic public assistance, including the expanded Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, requests for emergency food assistance remain higher than before the pandemic and show no sign of abating. SNAP benefits (if a family is eligible) do not cover the entirety of a household's monthly food expenses. Further, items such as diapers and wipes are not covered under SNAP.

Currently, Anne Arundel County's [food-insecure population is 61,640](#). That number is 10.5% of our community's residents, up from 47,260 (8.1%) just last year. According to [the most recent ALICE Report](#), of the 226,285 Anne Arundel County households, 33% (74,655) are below the ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed) threshold. Twenty-six percent are, however, deemed to be above the federal poverty line and, therefore, may not qualify for federal assistance programs, including SNAP benefits. According to the most recent U.S. Census data, 9.8% of Laurel-area residents live in poverty.

With these statistics, it is unsurprising that our community's need for supplemental food remains alarmingly high. Last year, in Anne Arundel County's fourth district, which includes the 20724 postal zip code, AACFB distributed food through our network partners at 16 locations, collectively providing over 68,000 instances of assistance to our neighbors experiencing food insecurity, which is 198 percent more than the year prior. The Anne Arundel County Food Bank is currently averaging more than 51,000 instances of assistance monthly across our entire network of partners. This is 6% more than last year and 19% more than two years ago. Even more staggering, it is 85% higher than 2019, one year before the pandemic.

Between July and December 2024, 6,800 individuals received food and/or diapers at an AACFB-supported pantry in the 20724 postal zip code. AACFB received \$50,000 through the Laurel Race Course Impact Grant program



for the current fiscal year to purchase food and diapers to be distributed through network partner pantries near the Laurel Race Course. These funds were fully expended within the first four months of the fiscal year. While AACFB has some funding from other sources to assist Laurel-area residents throughout the remainder of the year, additional resources are essential to meet the continued high demand for services in this area.

Supplemental local impact aid to Anne Arundel and Howard Counties and the City of Laurel to provide free food, vital programming like medical and dental services, and other necessities to backstretch workers employed at Laurel Race Course and low-income families living within one mile of the Laurel Race Course ensures they do not have to choose between having enough to eat and paying for other essentials such as rent, heat, or transportation to and from work. As such, we thank you for your consideration and urge a favorable report on SB 595.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Leah Paley".

Leah Aiello Paley, LMSW  
Chief Executive Officer  
Anne Arundel County Food Bank