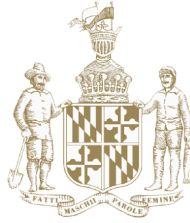


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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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HB1458

State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees- Establishment

Chair Barnes Chair, Vice Chair Kaiser and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of House Bill 1458, State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance for Refugees and Asylees, a bill designed to provide a state-level equivalent supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) benefit to some of Maryland's most vulnerable residents.

The enactment of Federal HR1 in July 2025, changed SNAP benefits to remove those with a refugee, asylee or other humanitarian parolee status from the eligibility criteria. This is a population group who are legally here in Maryland, but are understandably finding their way towards stable employment, housing and ways to meet other basic needs.

Refugees, asylees and humanitarian parolees come to the United States after fleeing horrific conditions. As a population group they are dedicated to building a new life here. They move quickly to earn money and once they do, they contribute to the local economy and pay taxes. The American Immigration Council estimates employment rates in Maryland of more than 97% for those who entered as refugees as well as those with temporary protected status.¹ For refugees to head out on that positive trajectory requires a lot of critical support through the initial transition period. The support SNAP benefits provide are known and acknowledged: the program reduces hunger, improves health outcomes, reduces healthcare costs and provides stability to households juggling multiple needs. Through the purchasing power they bring, SNAP benefits also return to the local economy where recipients live.

This loss of benefits comes at a challenging time of rising food insecurity and rising need. According to the Maryland Food Bank, more than a decade ago, one in five Marylanders described having been directly affected by hunger or food security. More recently, that number has increased to every one in three.² In a time of increasing inflation and reduced affordability,

¹ American Immigration Council [Immigrants in Maryland - American Immigration Council](#)

² Maryland Food Bank, [Strategy Group Research Report: Food Insecurity in Maryland](#)

there is no other safety net available to the refugee, asylee and humanitarian parolee population to replace the SNAP benefits they are now being denied.

In response, this bill seeks to use State supplemental funding to ensure that the refugees, asylees and other non-citizens who were eligible for SNAP prior to July 2025 will receive a benefit directly from the state. DHS estimates that there are approximately 10,000 refugees, asylees and humanitarian parolees currently in Maryland. Providing this benefit to these 10,000 Marylanders could be a lifeline that was ripped away from them. While the price tag to do so might be high, it is not the first time that we have stepped up to fill a critical need.

It was only last Fall that we reacted quickly, and as a unified body, to fund SNAP during the Federal shutdown. We fiercely advocated for continued SNAP benefits, even when it meant pulling funds from Maryland's Rainy Day Fund. As Chairman Barnes noted at the time, this reflects a basic American value: "Feeding people is above politics." Just as we acted during the shutdown, we need to act now. SNAP benefits go to the most impoverished in Maryland, the hungriest. They are a crucial support. For this population group who are just finding their way in a new country, we need to find a solution.

Thank you for the committee's consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 1458.