



**Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony
HB1458: State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees – Establishment**

March 19, 2026

SUPPORT

TO: The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair; The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Vice Chair; and Members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: The Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County’s local, state, and federally designated anti-poverty group, strongly supports HB1458, which would allow refugees and asylees to access Maryland SNAP benefits. This bill would address a challenge facing numerous categories of refugees and asylees, who became ineligible for federal SNAP benefits starting in July of 2025, following the passage of the 2025 Reconciliation Bill. The Bill restricts SNAP eligibility for many lawfully present residents including extremely vulnerable groups, such as refugees and asylees who were granted withholding of removal/deportation, victims of domestic violence, and victims of human trafficking.¹ HB1458 can address these cruel restrictions by ensuring refugees and asylees in Maryland have access to SNAP.

As the governing body for the Community Action Agency and the County’s Head Start program, we support this bill as a way to protect the most vulnerable members of our community, many of whom are served by our agency’s programs. In this case, our TESS Community Action Center and our Navigation Program provide services to many asylees, while many refugees are served by our partner organizations.

Under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), a refugee is an individual who has experienced past persecution or has a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Individuals who meet this definition may be considered for either refugee status under Section 207 of the INA if they are outside the United States, or asylum status under Section 208 of the INA, if they are already in the United States.

¹ <https://www.nilc.org/articles/what-new-federal-snap-restrictions-and-guidance-mean-for-immigrant-communities/>

Refugees are forced to flee their homes and seek safety in another country, oftentimes without warning. Refugees apply for protection while overseas and enter the U.S. with approved refugee status and documentation, while asylees request protection and may be granted asylum only once they are within the U.S. Refugees experience a combination of pre-migration trauma (violence, persecution), hazardous journeys, and post-migration challenges, including legal uncertainty, poverty, and restricted access to basic needs like food, healthcare and education. They often face discrimination, exploitation, and poor living conditions, which severely affect their physical and mental health.

At its core, HB1458 aims to address food insecurity for vulnerable community members. According to the Capital Area Food Bank, the issue of food security is worsening in its severity: for the third year in a row, the number of people who are experiencing very low food security has risen. More specifically, 35% of Montgomery County residents experience food insecurity, an increase from 27% in 2023.²

The high cost of living in Montgomery County only compounds the challenges facing food insecure residents. According to the Self-Sufficiency Standard, a family of four consisting of two adults, one school-age child, and one preschooler must earn \$122,943 to meet basic needs.³ This is over four times the Federal Poverty Level.

Cutting SNAP for those who are already suffering under the weight of the atrocities they have experienced is cruel and heartless. It will only increase food insecurity in our community and create more challenges for those struggling to reach the Self-Sufficiency Standard. These families are simply trying to do what we all strive to do - support their families and survive day-by-day. HB1458 recognizes this and seeks to right that very evident wrong. Addressing food insecurity is a longstanding priority for the CAB because we recognize that access to food is a basic need that everyone deserves. Therefore, the Montgomery County Community Action Board strongly supports HB1458 and asks for your favorable report.

² <https://hunger-report.capitalareafoodbank.org/report-2025/#food-insecurity-trends-in-greater-washington>

³ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/OCA/CommunityAction/Self-SufficiencyStandard.html>