

March 17, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Vice Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Favorable - HB1458 (State SNAP for Refugees and Asylees +)

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Maryland has long taken a clear-eyed, principled approach to welcoming people rebuilding their lives after war, persecution, violence, or catastrophe - neighbors whose cases have been vetted. **HB1458, State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees**, continues that tradition with a targeted, fiscally prudent bridge that prevents hunger among a small, clearly-defined group who recently lost federal SNAP eligibility due solely to a change in federal law, not due to any change in their lawful status or conduct. And even so, we continue to see the humanitarian categories associated with these populations systematically narrowed or rescinded in ways that align with broader U.S. government detention and deportation practices.

What changed and whom this bill covers. In July 2025, federal policy *permanently* narrowed SNAP eligibility for humanitarian entrants¹. As a result, refugees, asylees, survivors of human trafficking, certain survivors of domestic violence (VAWA self-petitioners), individuals granted withholding of removal, and parolees, including certain Afghan and Ukrainian humanitarian parolees, are no longer eligible for federal SNAP unless and until they adjust to lawful permanent residence^{2 3}. Compounding this loss, USCIS imposed sweeping adjudication holds throughout 2025: first a blanket, short-term pause on all refugee and asylee green-card (I-485) cases in March - April 2025⁴, then a November 2025 directive pausing refugee adjustments for those admitted between January 20, 2021 and February 20, 2025 pending re-review⁵, and a

¹ Public Law No. 119-21, § 10108 (2025).

² National Immigration Law Center. (2025, November 12). *Clarifying access: What new federal SNAP restrictions and guidance mean for immigrant communities*. <https://www.nilc.org/articles/what-new-federal-snap-restrictions-and-guidance-mean-for-immigrant-communities/>

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2025, December 9). *SNAP provisions of the One Big Beautiful Bill – alien SNAP eligibility – Question and Answer #1*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/obbb-alien-eligibility-qas1>

⁴ Immigration Policy Tracking Project. (2025, March 25). *USCIS pauses green card processing for refugees and asylees*. <https://immpolicytracking.org/policies/reported-uscis-pauses-green-card-processing-for-refugees-and-asylees/>

⁵ International Refugee Assistance Project. (2026). *Newly released government documents confirm policy delaying green card applications filed by refugees and asylees*. <https://refugeerights.org/news-resources/newly-released-government-documents-confirm-policy-delaying-green-card-applications-filed-by-refugees-and-asylees-lkt-foia>

December 2, 2025 policy memo placing additional holds on many benefit requests (including I-485s) for nationals of 19 'high-risk' countries whose applications require enhanced vetting⁶. These decisions and their resultant delays are procedural and agency-driven - not applicant-driven. HB1458 simply preserves the nutritional support Marylanders in these categories were eligible for on July 3, 2025, until they complete the federal adjustment process.

The scope is narrow and time-bound. HB1458 does not open a broad new benefit. It applies only to recent arrivals who have not yet adjusted to LPR status and who lost SNAP solely due to the 2025 federal change; the Department of Human Services administers and verifies eligibility, tied to Maryland's SNAP standards as of July 3, 2025, ensuring precision and guardrails.

Context at a macro-scale. Over multiple years, Maryland has provided services to newcomers at scale through MORA programs: 2,564 (FY20)⁷, 2,423 (FY21)⁸, 4,186 (FY22)⁹, 5,580 (FY23)¹⁰, 10,620 (FY24)¹¹, and 11,028 (FY25)¹² - figures that include both new and prior-year arrivals across categories (refugees, SIVs, asylees, parolees, and more). HB1458, however, reaches only the recent, finite subset who lost federal SNAP and only until they become LPRs, meaning the number of those aided is guaranteed to diminish over time. The goal being that all newcomers in this category are eventually adjusted and no longer require state support.

Returns on investment. Maryland's economic data shows that immigrants have been essential to stabilizing the state's workforce and growth trajectory. According to the Maryland Comptroller (2024)¹³, immigrants make up more than one-fifth of Maryland's workforce, filling shortages in critical sectors, such as healthcare, construction, STEM, and service provision. Drawing on Census microdata (2023)¹⁴, the American Immigration Council (AIC) finds that immigrant households in Maryland pay \$15.8 billion in federal, state, and local taxes annually and hold \$39.5 billion in spending power. Refugee households contribute substantially as well: AIC estimates Maryland is home to 47,800 likely refugees with a 97.1% employment rate, \$1.9 billion in spending power, and \$739.8 million in annual tax contributions¹⁵. National data from the Annual Survey of Refugees consistently shows that refugees across the United States achieve strong early integration outcomes, including rising employment rates, English

⁶ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2025, December 2). *PM-602-0192: Hold and review of all pending asylum applications and all USCIS benefit applications filed by aliens from high-risk countries.*

<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/policy-alerts/PM-602-0192-PendingApplicationsHighRiskCountries-20251202.pdf>

⁷ Maryland Office of Refugees & Asylees. (2020). *MORA Fiscal Year 2020 At a Glance.*

⁸ Maryland Office of Refugees & Asylees. (2021). *MORA Fiscal Year 2021 At a Glance.*

⁹ Maryland Office of Refugees & Asylees. (2022). *MORA Fiscal Year 2022 At a Glance.*

¹⁰ Maryland Office of Refugees & Asylees. (2023). *MORA Fiscal Year 2023 At a Glance.*

¹¹ Maryland Office of Refugees & Asylees. (2024). *MORA Fiscal Year 2024 At a Glance.*

¹² Maryland Office of Refugees & Asylees. (2025). *MORA Fiscal Year 2025 At a Glance.*

¹³ Maryland Office of the Comptroller. (2024). *State of the Economy Series: Immigration and the Economy.*

<https://www.marylandcomptroller.gov/content/dam/mdcomp/md/reports/research/immigration-economy.pdf>

¹⁴ American Immigration Council. (2023). *Immigrants in Maryland* (interactive profile).

<https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/maryland/>

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

proficiency gains, and rapid progress toward economic self-sufficiency ¹⁶. A recent Cato Institute white paper analyzing fiscal data from 1994-2023 similarly concludes that immigrants produce a positive long-term net fiscal impact, with tax contributions exceeding public expenditures as earnings and workforce participation rise over time ¹⁷. Ensuring basic nutrition during the early months of resettlement directly supports job retention, school attendance, and continued rapid economic self-sufficiency, protecting workforce and revenue gains.

Ready to work. Maryland's humanitarian newcomers arrive overwhelmingly in their working years: 78% of foreign-born Marylanders are ages 16-64, compared to 60.3% of U.S.-born residents ¹⁸, positioning them to enter essential industries immediately upon resettlement and receipt of work authorization. This alignment with prime working age translates into swift workforce integration. In FY23, the Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees supported 1,431 job-seekers through employment-services programs ¹⁹, demonstrating strong employer demand and Maryland's growing capacity to match newcomers with available jobs. Maintaining food security during this initial period is critical to sustaining the very workforce outcomes that Maryland's economy depends on.

In summary, HB1458 aligns with Maryland's long, bipartisan legacy of welcoming refugees and supporting families working toward stability. It fills a narrow but consequential gap created by federal policy shifts and ensures that Maryland mitigates hunger among legally present families who were previously eligible under state rules.

We respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report for [HB1458](#), **State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees**. Thank you for your leadership and for your continued commitment to the wellbeing of all Maryland residents.

Sincerely,

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Maryland
Maryland Hunger Solutions
Global Refuge
World Relief Baltimore
Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSSNCA)
Anne Arundel County Food Bank, Inc. (AACFB)
Seedco
AAMC
Montgomery County Food Council
Manna Food Center
Maryland Food Bank

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement. (2026, February 9). *Annual Survey of Refugees*. <https://acf.gov/orr/programs/refugees/annual-survey-refugees>

¹⁷ Nowrasteh, A., & Forrester, J. (2024). Immigrants' recent effects on government budgets, 1994–2023. Cato Institute. <https://www.cato.org/white-paper/immigrants-recent-effects-government-budgets-1994-2023/>

¹⁸ ¹⁸ American Immigration Council. (2023). *Immigrants in Maryland (interactive profile)*. <https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/maryland/>

¹⁹ Maryland Office of Refugees & Asylees. (2023). *MORA Fiscal Year 2023 At a Glance*.

<https://dhs.maryland.gov/documents/Refugees%20and%20Asylees/MORA-Fact-Sheet-FY23-At-a-Glance.pdf>

Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Poverty Free Maryland
Public Justice Center
National Council of Jewish Women, Maryland
Justice & Advocacy Coalition of Montgomery County
Solutions in Hometown Connections
Advance Maryland
Project SAFE
Immigration Outreach Service Center
Interfaith Works
Horizon Foundation
Capital Area Food Bank
Homes Not Borders
Reverend Stephen Tickner, North Chevy Chase Christian Church
CASH Campaign of Maryland
Gaithersburg Beloved Community Initiative
Tahirih Justice Center
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
The Living Legends Awards for Service to Humanity Inc.
Vietnamese American Services
Chicken of the Woods Parmaculture Farm, LLC
Community Engagement and Consultation Group
Colesville Presbyterian Church
The Universities at Shady Grove
County Executive Marc B. Elrich, Montgomery County
District #3 Council Member Eric Olson, Prince George's County Council
District #5 Council Member Kristin Mink, Montgomery County Council
Gina Karlin, Director of English Language Services - Baltimore City Community College
Jean Robinson, District #21 Constituent

[Organizational logos included in circulated letter]

CC:

Delegate Mark S. Chang
Delegate Mark Edelson
Delegate Catherine M. Forbes
Delegate Andrea Fletcher Harrison
Delegate R. Julian Ivey
Delegate Adrienne A. Jones
Delegate Ryan S. Spiegel
Delegate Karen R. Toles
Delegate M. Courtney Watson