



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

March 19, 2026

TESTIMONY FOR HB 1458
State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for
Refugees and Asylees – Establishment
Favorable

House Appropriations Committee

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Kaiser, and Members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Claudet Miranda-Zambrano and I am the Senior Anti-Hunger Program Associate focusing on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach at Maryland Hunger Solutions.

Maryland Hunger Solutions is a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to end hunger, improve nutrition and promote the wellbeing of Marylanders by maximizing participation in federal nutrition programs, addressing root causes of hunger and advocating for permanent solutions upending hunger and poverty statewide. We strive to overcome existing barriers to state and federal nutrition assistance programs and create self-sustaining connections for low-income Maryland residents experiencing food insecurity.

Maryland Hunger Solutions conducts robust Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach across the state providing direct application assistance to any Marylander seeking to apply for SNAP, offering one-on-one support to complete applications, gathering required documentation, troubleshoot case issues, and navigating recertification. Our goal is to reduce barriers to enrollment and help ensure individuals and families can access the food assistance they need in a timely manner.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill (HB) 1458.

HB 1458 seeks to establish a State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees, Asylees, and other humanitarian populations stripped of federal SNAP eligibility as a result of the Budget Reconciliation Act of 2025 (H.R. 1). Not only did H.R. 1 impose harsher work requirements as a condition to receive SNAP, but it also drastically reduced noncitizen eligibility by limiting eligible categories to only Cuban and Haitian entrants, Compacts of Free Association (COFA) citizens, and Lawfully Permanent Residents (LPRs) after a 5-year waiting period, with some exceptions.¹ H.R. 1 removed eligibility for all humanitarian immigrants previously eligible including but not limited to: refugees, asylees, survivors of trafficking or domestic violence, and certain parolees until they adjust their status to LPR or green card holder.²

¹ United States Department of Agriculture. 2025. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Implementation of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 – Alien SNAP Eligibility." Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/obbb-alien-eligibility>.

² Protecting Immigrant Families. 2026. "2025 Changes to Eligibility for Key Programs by Immigration Status." Available at: <https://pifcoalition.org/resources/library/changes-to-immigrant-eligibility-chart/>



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According to the Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees (MORA), between October 2024 and September 2025, Maryland was home to 1,251 asylees, 2,891 refugees, 374 Afghan Humanitarian Parolees, 20 victims of trafficking, 120 U.S. born Refugee children, and 1,608 Afghan special immigrants.³ These populations reflect the continued demand for humanitarian protection in Maryland and highlight the importance of ensuring that newly resettled families have access to essential support, especially food assistance.

Restricting noncitizens' access to federal nutrition programs intended to combat food insecurity reflects a policy choice that creates unequal access. By tying SNAP eligibility to immigration status, H.R. 1 restricts many individuals from accessing critical benefits designed to address hunger and promote economic stability.

Limiting SNAP eligibility for noncitizens creates significant barriers for immigrant communities to improve their food security. These restrictions not only impact noncitizens but have deep impacts in mixed immigration status households where children may be U.S. citizens and eligible for SNAP. H.R. 1 fosters inequity and treats food as a privilege instead of a human right. SNAP is proven to reduce reliance on food pantries, banks, and other emergency food resources.⁴ These institutions are already extremely overwhelmed and cannot meet the demand needed to support families in Maryland facing food insecurity, especially when the federal government has divested.⁵

SNAP is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. Therefore, restoring fairness to nutrition assistance means confronting both the formal eligibility restrictions and the administrative practices that disproportionately exclude noncitizens from accessing critical nutrition supports. Although many barriers are framed as neutral program requirements promoting self-sufficiency, their effect has led to immigrant families being denied access to essential nutrition assistance. The *State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefit for Asylees and Refugees* would move Maryland towards meaningful reform by eliminating immigrant exclusionary rules and ensuring that this administration aligns with the fundamental right to food. Establishing a state SNAP supplement will offer a benefit to qualified immigrants and previously eligible populations to help restore some fairness and dignity to these households that greatly depend on SNAP.

SNAP is more than just a safety net; it gives people agency. The State SNAP Supplement will allow low-income individuals to participate in the marketplace as consumers rather than passive recipients. By receiving this state supplement, families and individuals will have the autonomy to make decisions about what they eat, where they can purchase foods, and how to nourish themselves and their families. Autonomy is essential as people should have the right to purchase foods that meet their dietary needs as well as their cultural and religious practices, while treating health conditions like diabetes or food allergies. The ability to make these

³ Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees (MORA). 2026. "MORA Fiscal Year 2025 at a glance." Available at: <https://dhs.maryland.gov/documents/Refugees%20and%20Asylees/MORA%20Annual%20Fact%20Sheet-FY25%20at%20a%20Glance.pdf>

⁴ Plata-Nino, G., Wallin, A., Huskey, J., & Lanier, L. (2025). "Supporting state economic stability and strength after OBBBA/H.R. 1 SNAP cuts." Available at: <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Economic-Stability-AfterHR-1-SNAP-Cuts.pdf>

⁵ *Id.*



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choices promotes better health outcomes and reinforces personal freedoms, especially for immigrant families whose food traditions and dietary practices are sometimes excluded or overlooked by our food system.

Robust outreach, education, and advocacy must be done to protect immigrant communities. We call on the General Assembly, together with anti-hunger and anti-poverty advocates to champion the needs to immigrant families at risk of losing food assistance in the wake of H.R. 1. Earning the trust of immigrant communities is not only a matter of fairness but also of public health and social stability. When families can access nutrition assistance without fear, they are more likely to maintain consistent health, support local economies, and contribute to community well-being. Policymakers must recognize that trust-building is ongoing, requiring both protective policies and proactive efforts to reassure communities that this state benefit will exist to support and not punish their households.

By establishing a State SNAP Supplement for refugees and asylees, Maryland can fulfill the promise of SNAP as a program that fights against hunger. We urge this committee to act quickly and decisively to ensure that previously eligible immigrant households can access the critical nutrition assistance they need without fear, delay, or discrimination.

For these reasons, Maryland Hunger Solutions respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 1458.