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TESTIMONY ON HB#1458- POSITION: FAVORABLE

State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees - Establishment

TO: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser and members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#1458, **State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees – Establishment**

My Jewish faith teaches me, as found in Deuteronomy 15:7-10:

⁷“If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your G-d is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, ⁸but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. ⁹Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, ‘The seventh year, the year of release is near,’ and your eye look grudgingly^[a] on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the Lord against you, and you be guilty of sin. ¹⁰You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your G-d will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.

The National Immigration Law Center has discussed *Clarifying Access: What New Federal SNAP Restrictions and Guidance Mean for Immigrant Communities*¹

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a lifeline that prevents millions of families from going hungry. The devastating budget bill passed last summer dramatically restricted eligibility for this program for many immigrants. ...Two federal laws restrict immigrant eligibility for SNAP: a 1996 law that created a five-year waiting period for SNAP eligibility for certain qualified immigrants, but included critical exceptions for humanitarian immigrants; and the 2025 reconciliation bill, which largely restricts eligibility for most lawfully present immigrants except for lawful permanent residents (with some exceptions). The 1996 exceptions clearly remain in place despite the 2025 bill, but new federal guidance is unclear on this point. Federal SNAP benefits have never been available to undocumented immigrants.

SNAP is federally funded but state-administered. Therefore, state agencies across the country have a clear responsibility to ensure eligible individuals can access the benefits they need, not to introduce additional barriers.

Maryland and the other states are now being forced to take action rather than have residents cruelly removed from the program face food insecurity and starvation. Church World Service has an *Explainer: Federal Food Assistance Eligibility Changes Impacting Refugees and Immigrants*²

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

² <https://cwsglobal.org/policy-statements/explainer-federal-food-assistance-eligibility-changes-impacting-refugees-and-immigrants/>

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ([SNAP](#)) – formerly known as the [Food Stamp Program](#) – provides cash assistance to eligible low-income households to help them purchase groceries. SNAP is overseen federally by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and is typically administered by state governments (though in ten states, [county](#) governments operate the program). To qualify for SNAP, individuals must meet certain income, workforce participation, and immigration status requirements. SNAP eligibility rules have long excluded large categories of immigrants, including undocumented people, many asylum seekers, DACA recipients, and Temporary Protected Status holders.

On July 4, 2025, President Trump signed into law the “[One Big Beautiful Bill Act](#)” (OBBBA), massive tax and spending legislation that contains a wide range of anti-immigrant measures. The bill renders many humanitarian arrivals newly ineligible for SNAP benefits. Now, only eligible U.S. citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs or “green card holders”), Cuban and Haitian entrants, and certain Pacific Islanders can access SNAP.

Refugees, asylees, (individuals granted asylum by an immigration judge) and other humanitarian entrants – including victims of trafficking and certain survivors of domestic violence – are now categorically ineligible for SNAP unless they become LPRs, which can often be a lengthy and expensive process.

This bill says that Maryland values every resident and will not starve anyone just because of their citizenship status. We will accomplish this by establishing the State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees; provide the purpose of the Program is to expand food access to certain households; require the Department of Human Services to administer the Program; establish that certain individuals under the Program receive a certain supplemental benefit; and require the Department of Human Services to adopt certain regulations.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#1458.