

## HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY

### FAVORABLE

#### **HB 1458 – State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees - Establishment**

**House Appropriations Committee  
March 19, 2026**



**Health Care for the Homeless supports HB 1458**, which would create a State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for Refugees and Asylees 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. As SNAP is a lifeline for low-income families, this bill will help prevent poverty and homelessness.

#### **HB 1458 is needed to mitigate the damage caused by recent federal changes in SNAP**

In July 2025, federal policy permanently narrowed SNAP eligibility for humanitarian entrants. 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. Compounding this loss, USCIS imposed sweeping adjudication holds throughout 2025. HB 1458 is narrowly-tailored to preserve the nutritional support Marylanders in these categories were eligible for on July 3, 2025, until they complete the federal adjustment process.

#### **HB 1458 will prevent poverty and help improve health outcomes**

SNAP supports families at the brink of poverty and homelessness as they struggle to make ends meet while facing growing financial stressors such as rent, medical expenses, and child care. SNAP benefits have been proven to reduce poverty, help keep tenuously housed families more stably housed, and allow those experiencing homelessness a greater ability to find and maintain housing rather than spend time searching for food.

The federal changes on SNAP have extremely concerning health implications. Food insecurity has a direct impact on physical and mental health for people of all income levels and ages. As health care providers for people experiencing homelessness, we are always concerned about our patients' ability to access a healthy and adequate food supply. People experiencing homelessness face higher rates of diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and mental health and addiction. It is well-established in research that a healthy diet is critical to preventing and/or managing these health conditions. Other sources of food for our patients--such as soup kitchens--are often underfunded and unable to provide fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grains, and other healthy options. We are not surprised when our patients end up hospitalized or in the emergency room because of high blood sugar and high blood pressure due to the poor food choices they have. SNAP benefits are vital to supplementing limited food options and allow us to better work with our patients on their health needs. This bill will

mitigate the harmful impacts of federal SNAP changes and restore health outcomes for many vulnerable Marylanders.

Everyone has the right to have essential needs met such as food and shelter. For individuals and families experiencing homelessness, the stress from trying to obtain shelter, employment and personal items is enormous. Having access to a source of food alleviates one more burden for families already struggling to meet their basic needs. We strongly urge a favorable report on HB 1458.

*Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We deliver medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, housing support services, and housing for over 11,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County.*

*Our Vision: Everyone is healthy and has a safe home in a just and respectful community.*

*Our Mission: We work to end homelessness through racially equitable health care, housing and advocacy in partnership with those of us who have experienced it.*

For more information, visit [www.hchmd.org](http://www.hchmd.org).