

HB1458

State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees - Establishment

Appropriations

March 19, 2026

Favorable

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports House Bill Number 1458, which establishes the State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees to expand food access to certain households, directs the Department of Human Services to administer the program, provides a supplemental benefit for qualified individuals, and requires the Department to develop regulations for implementation.

For over a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve independence, and prepare for educational success. We also welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities through our Esperanza Center, which has served immigrant families since 1963. Each year, thousands of immigrants from around the world rely on the center for support as they navigate life in a new country. In FY25, 3,298 immigrant clients accessed critical services and resources, including 1,151 individuals who received immigration legal services and 103 students who reached their English language learning goals. We also launched the Building Hope Dundalk Support Center, an interdisciplinary initiative created in partnership with other Catholic Charities programs. The center has already served 1,216 immigrants, connected 238 individuals to job readiness programs, and linked 56 clients to therapy services.

As one of the largest providers of services to immigrants in Maryland, we see firsthand the profound role that food security plays in helping individuals achieve stability and self-sufficiency. Recent federal changes now threaten the ability of many refugees and asylees to access SNAP benefits. According to KFF Health News, these changes will remove SNAP eligibility for approximately 90,000 refugees nationwide each month. In Maryland alone, more than 10,000 refugees and asylees relied on SNAP last year.

These benefits are especially important after arrival, when newcomers are settling, securing work authorization, and navigating unfamiliar systems as they pursue economic independence. Reliable food support during this transition helps families focus on stabilizing their lives and preparing for work. In Maryland, approximately 78% of foreign-born residents are between the ages of 16 and 64, a key demographic for expanding the state's workforce.

Without this support, families face greater food insecurity and health challenges associated with poor nutrition, undermining their ability to work, study, and rebuild stable lives. Many refugee and asylee households have children whose health, development, and ability to succeed in school depend on consistent access to nutritious food. Ensuring access to basic nutrition helps families remain healthy, pursue employment and education, and move more quickly toward stability and self-sufficiency.

For these reasons, Catholic Charities of Baltimore urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB1458.

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy on behalf of Meti Negassa, Advocacy Fellow.