



Testimony in Support of HB 1458 – State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees - Establishment
House Appropriations Committee
March 13, 2026

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Anne Arundel County Food Bank (AACFB), I respectfully urge the Committee to vote favorably for House Bill 1458: State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees – Establishment, which would create a state supplemental nutrition assistance program for refugees and asylees. This program is intended to expand food access for households that often face significant barriers during the early stages of resettlement.

Food banks across Maryland are seeing growing demand for assistance as families struggle to keep pace with rising costs of housing, transportation, and groceries. AACFB has observed a 19 percent increase in people served from October through February of this fiscal year through our network. Refugees and asylees often arrive in our communities with limited financial resources while working to secure employment, housing, and stability. During this transition period, access to nutrition assistance is critical to ensuring families can meet their most basic needs. These individuals come to the United States after escaping war, persecution, violence, or other crises.

Food banks and pantries play an important role in supporting newly arrived families. However, charitable food alone cannot meet the full scale of need, especially as demand continues to rise. In Anne Arundel County alone, approximately 66,000 residents are considered food insecure, even before accounting for recent federal policy changes affecting SNAP eligibility. HB1458 would help ensure that refugees and asylees have access to a modest supplemental benefit during a particularly vulnerable period. By strengthening food access through this targeted program, the State can reduce pressure on emergency food systems while helping families move more quickly toward stability and self-sufficiency.

Importantly, HB1458 is narrowly tailored, applying only to recent arrivals who have not yet adjusted to Lawful Permanent Resident status and who lost SNAP eligibility due to the 2025 federal policy change. Eligibility would be administered and verified by the Department of Human Services and tied to Maryland's SNAP standards as of July 3, 2025, ensuring appropriate safeguards.

At the Anne Arundel County Food Bank, our network serves tens of thousands of residents each month, and we see firsthand that when families have reliable access to nutrition, they are better able to focus on employment, education, and long-term stability. For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB1458.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leah Aiello Paley".

Leah Aiello Paley, LMSW
Chief Executive Officer
Anne Arundel County Food Bank