

HB 1458
State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees –
Establishment
House Appropriations Committee
March 19, 2026

FAVORABLE

HB 1458 establishes the State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees, which would provide food assistance benefits to refugees and asylees that have lost access to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits through changes made in HR 1.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that 1 in 3 Marylanders are at risk of food insecurity. A person who is food insecure does not have consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day, and this problem persists in every area of the state. There are also communities and populations who are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, including families with children, older adults, and communities of color. Immigrant families that are facing food insecurity are also burdened by unique challenges, such as the availability of foods that are culturally familiar. The causes of food insecurity are complex and often include factors such as financial hardship and low income.

The Maryland Department of Human Services reported that they served over 10,000 refugees and asylees through the SNAP program in 2025. In the next redetermination period for benefits, these refugees and asylees, some of the most vulnerable of our neighbors who are attempting to navigate life in a new country, will lose a lifeline in the form of SNAP benefits and be forced to seek food through the charitable assistance network. Our partners have already begun seeing increases in immigrant neighbors at their pantries – and not just in those seeking food assistance. Some locations have reported neighbors seeking eviction prevention assistance at unprecedented rates as they face impossible decisions between paying rent and putting food on the table.

Left out of such reports is the unknown population of immigrant neighbors that have stopped seeking food assistance altogether out of fear of deportation or confinement. In the words of one pantry manager, neighbors are dealing with both increased food insecurity and increased fear at the same time. HB 1458 will serve a critical role in filling the gap left by harmful restrictions that have left our immigrant neighbors scared and uncertain about the future. This tangible, substantial action by the State can only benefit our joint efforts and shared goal of feeding Marylanders who are affected by hunger.

For these reasons, the Maryland Food Bank appreciates the Committee's consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 1458.