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## FAVORABLE

Thursday, March 19, 2026, 1:00 pm  
House Appropriations Committee

### State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees – Establishment

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which pursues systemic change for social justice, economic and race equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Health and Benefits Equity Project advocates to protect and expand access to healthcare and safety net services for Marylanders struggling to make ends meet. We support policies and practices that are designed to eliminate economic and racial inequities and enable every Marylander to attain their highest level of health.

#### **HB1458 restores access to food for immigrant households that lost federal SNAP eligibility due to HR1.**

We commend Delegate Shetty for her dedication to reducing food insecurity and childhood poverty in MD and for introducing HB1458, which we strongly support because it will restore SNAP eligibility for immigrants with humanitarian statuses who are losing the benefit simply because of recent federal changes President Trump signed into law in July 2025. These federal changes further restrict eligibility for SNAP to U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, Cuban or Haitian entrants, and Compact of Free Association (COFA) citizens of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau.<sup>1</sup> These harsh and inhumane immigrant eligibility restrictions are layered on top of existing narrow immigrant restrictions from federal law from 1996 and exacerbate food insecurity, which defeats the core purpose of SNAP.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the recent federal changes, refugees, asylees, noncitizen survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence, and other immigrants who are living in the U.S. with humanitarian protection by the federal government will be cut from SNAP. The changes are already in effect now in Maryland; new applicants who do not meet the immigrant eligibility are denied and immigrant families who were certified for SNAP eligibility will lose benefits at the next interim change, MD Benefit

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<sup>1</sup> Public Law No. 119-21, § 10108 (2025); *see also* USDA Food and Nutrition Services, “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Implementation of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 – Alien SNAP eligibility (October 31, 2025), *available at* <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/obbb-alien-eligibility>

<sup>2</sup> Prior to HR1, SNAP was available to “qualified” immigrants which was defined in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996. Even qualified immigrants are generally subject to a five-year waiting period before they can access SNAP.

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Review, or recertification.<sup>3</sup> HB1458 will ensure a more inclusive and stronger safety net for immigrant individuals and families that are experiencing food insecurity in our state.

### **HB1458 will clarify uncertainty and fear in immigrant communities around SNAP benefit eligibility in MD.**

The xenophobic rhetoric and anti-immigrant policies from the federal administration have deepened fear in accessing food and other benefits among the immigrant clients and communities we serve throughout Maryland. The evolving policy landscape has also created widespread uncertainty around benefit eligibility, public charge inadmissibility, and data sharing with law enforcement agencies. For example, we worked with a family that was approved for SNAP prior to the federal changes, but will be losing their SNAP any day due to their immigration status. The family is uncertain when their SNAP will end. Department of Social Services (DSS) notices have contradicting information and come in English even though that is not the family's spoken language. The family has visited DSS multiple times to seek clarity, bringing a family member to interpret, yet are still unclear about when their SNAP will close. The uncertainty around when their benefits will terminate makes it hard to financially plan and adds psychological distress around looming food insecurity and risk of eviction from benefit loss.

### **HB1458 is a step closer to recognizing food access as a basic human right.**

The human right to adequate food is widely recognized in many countries and instruments in international law.<sup>4</sup> The right to food is interconnected with one's health and ability to enjoy all other rights.<sup>5</sup> Over ten years ago, the American Bar Association passed Resolution 107, urging governments to "promote the human right to adequate food and nutrition for all through increased funding, development and implementation of strategies to prevent infringement of that right."<sup>6</sup> SNAP is our country's most effective anti-hunger program, known to reduce childhood poverty and hunger. Families receiving SNAP can spend limited household income to cover costs of other necessities such as housing, utilities, clothing, medical expenses, and transportation. The loss of SNAP under HR1 means families whose incomes are low enough to qualify for SNAP will need to divert the little income they have to try to cover those other basic costs. HB1458 reverses the cruel policy implemented under HR1 that treats access to food and adequate nutrition as a privilege reserved for only some people.

We request that this Committee issue a favorable report on HB1458. If you have any questions, please contact Michelle Madaio (she/her) at (410) 625-9409, ext. 245 or [madaiom@publicjustice.org](mailto:madaiom@publicjustice.org).

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<sup>3</sup> MD Department of Human Services, Action Transmittal #26-11 (effective January 23, 2026), *available at* <https://dhs.maryland.gov/documents/FIA/Action%20Transmittals-AT%20-%20Information%20Memo-IM/AT-IM2026/26-11%20AT%20H.R.%201%202025%20Modifications%20to%20Qualified%20Immigrant%20Statuses%20combine.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Although the United States has not ratified these international instruments recognizing food as a basic human right, it is widely recognized by countries around the world. United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which recognizes "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care...". The human right to food is also recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment 12, The Right to Adequate Food, (1999), *available at* <https://docs.un.org/en/E/C.12/1999/5>.

<sup>6</sup> Resolution 107 of the American Bar Association. Debra Cassens Weiss, "ABA resolution endorses a human right to adequate food," (February 10, 2014), *available at* [https://www.abajournal.com/news/article/aba\\_resolution\\_endorses\\_a\\_human\\_right\\_to\\_adequate\\_food](https://www.abajournal.com/news/article/aba_resolution_endorses_a_human_right_to_adequate_food).