



MARCH 19, 2026

# Maryland Should Restore SNAP Benefits for Eligible Refugees

## Position Statement in Support of House Bill 1458

*Given before the House Appropriations Committee*

Each year, Maryland welcomes approximately two thousand immigrants on humanitarian grounds from around the world, including refugees, asylees, and victims of trafficking. Many of them were receiving SNAP benefits until their eligibility was removed by federal policy shifts and administrative delays in the green card adjustment process. These individuals did not lose eligibility due to any wrongdoing, change in lawful status, or change in need for assistance. The transition for refugees and asylees is fraught with systemic barriers, most notably food insecurity. House Bill 1458 is vital because it closes the "hunger gap" that exists when federal benefits expire before a family has reached economic self-sufficiency. The bill provides a targeted, time-limited solution to this gap by establishing the State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees. **For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports House Bill 1458.**

HB 1458 is a cost-effective investment that will help families make ends meet as they get established in Maryland and support more efficient use of public resources. Research shows that early food security is central to supporting job stability, school attendance, and faster self-sufficiency. Many of Maryland's newcomers arrive ready to work and contribute, so maintaining basic nutrition during their initial months here will continue to strengthen our workforce and local communities.

This bill does not create a broad new permanent benefit. It only preserves a benefit for a previously eligible group until the federal adjustment process is complete. The Department of Human Services will administer and verify eligibility under existing SNAP standards, ensuring that there will be no double counted spending. The Department also already has the mechanism to distribute such benefits due to the existing state SNAP supplemental benefit for senior citizens. Adding eligible refugees and asylees to this system will not require excessive administrative adjustments.

A lapse in food security for whole groups of Marylanders would set us up for deeper long-term consequences. This bill is an opportunity for Maryland to prove our commitment to practical solutions that support families working toward stability while protecting the state's

economic and community interests. **The Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully requests that the Committee make a favorable report on House Bill 1458.**

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## Equity Impact Analysis

### *Summary*

HB 1458 establishes the State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees to provide supplemental benefits to refugees and asylees previously eligible for federal SNAP benefits.

### *Background*

- A provision of HR. 1, the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” restricts SNAP benefits only to citizens, legal permanent residents (LPRs), “Cuban and Haitian entrants”, and residents of Compact of Free Association nations. People who are now ineligible include refugees, asylees, Afghan evacuees (non-LPR), people granted humanitarian parole for at least one year, survivors of human trafficking, and survivors of domestic violence.
- Last year, 11,028 federally recognized refugees participated in programs by the Maryland Office for Refugees and Asylees (MORA) to ease their integration into American society<sup>1</sup>.
- According to the International Rescue Committee, refugees have an entrepreneurship rate that exceeds even that of other immigrants. In 2019, 13% of refugees in the U.S. were entrepreneurs, as compared to the 11.7% rate among non-refugee immigrants and the 9% rate among U.S.-born citizens.
- The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that every SNAP dollar invested in children returns \$62 in value over the long-term in the country. Low-income adults who receive SNAP benefits incur nearly 25 percent less in medical care costs than low-income adults who do not receive SNAP benefits. SNAP is also associated with a reduced likelihood of repeating grades among children in low-income families.

### *Equity Implications*

In Maryland, a significant number of humanitarian immigrant populations are people of color, making supporting them inseparable from racial justice work. Through HB 1458’s support for refugees, Maryland will help dismantle barriers to employment for diverse newcomers to become entrepreneurs, fill labor shortages, and build economic prosperity.

The table below details which humanitarian immigrant populations in Maryland are eligible and ineligible for federal SNAP benefits based on number who participated in the Maryland Office of Refugees and Asylees programs in fiscal year 2025.

Federal SNAP Eligibility Status	Humanitarian Immigrant Population	Number of individuals in Maryland
Ineligible	Refugees	2891
Ineligible	Asylees	1251
Ineligible	Afghan Special Immigrants	1608
Ineligible	Afghan Humanitarian Parolees	374
Ineligible	Victims of trafficking	20
Eligible	Cuban and Haitian parolees/entrants	4433
Eligible	US born refugee children	120

House Bill 1458 would restore SNAP benefits to these humanitarian immigrants.

*Impact*

House Bill 1458 will likely **improve racial and economic equity** in Maryland.

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<sup>1</sup> The Maryland Office of Refugees and Asylees Fiscal Year 2025 At A Glance