

(House Version) SB0461 - FAV - Written Testimony s

Uploaded by: Gloria Brown-Burnett

Position: FAV



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Gloria Brown Burnett, Interim Secretary

March 31, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, Room 121
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB 461 - SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM-
HEAT AND EAT PROGRAM- ELIGIBILITY - POSITION: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report for Senate Bill (SB) 461, which passed unanimously out of the House.

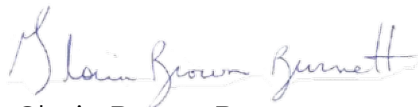
With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS provides preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to assist Marylanders in reaching their full potential. Our Family Investment Administration (FIA) implements the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which is affected by SB 461. SNAP has a provision, known as "Heat and Eat" which enables SNAP customers to maximize their nutrition benefits if they also receive federally-funded energy assistance. The proposed bill updates the statutory language in [Human Services §5-506](#) to ensure the Standard Utility Allowance is only applicable to households with an elderly or disabled member.

Recent federal legislation changes stemming from [H.R.1](#) restrict eligibility for the Heat and Eat program. Now, only households that have an elderly or disabled member qualify for the standard utility allowance when receiving energy assistance funded by the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). For more information on how H.R.1 changes impact Marylanders, please see DHS' [January 28 Committee briefing materials](#).

Without this legislative fix in SB 461, Maryland would face a substantial financial burden. The state Heat and Eat program, authorized in [Human Services §5-506](#), relies on federal funding. If Maryland does not align its program with federal law, the state would become responsible for over \$107M in SNAP benefits per program year. The additional costs would result from a loss of federal SNAP benefits for approximately 108,136 households that currently receive the Heat and Eat benefit but do not have an elderly or disabled member. The households will still retain SNAP eligibility, but will no longer receive the additional benefit amount provided under Heat and Eat's Standard Utility Allowance.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide a favorable testimony to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. If you require additional information, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at justin.hayes1@maryland.gov.

In service,



Gloria Brown Burnett
Interim Secretary

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAVSB461_HOUSE CROSS.

Uploaded by: Michelle Zelaya

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 31st 2026

SB461

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Heat and Eat Program – Eligibility
Appropriations Committee
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 461**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state’s second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 461 alters eligibility requirements for the Heat and Eat Program within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by requiring participating households to include at least one elderly or disabled individual. The Heat and Eat Program links energy assistance with SNAP benefits, ensuring that households receiving help with heating costs also qualify for increased nutritional assistance. By refining eligibility to specifically include elderly and disabled individuals, this legislation prioritizes households whose needs are the greatest and whose financial burdens are often the most severe.

This policy provides meaningful benefits across the State of Maryland by reducing food insecurity, lowering the economic strain on vulnerable households, and ensuring that taxpayer resources are directed to those with the most significant needs. Maryland communities benefit when their older adults and individuals with disabilities can maintain stable housing and proper nutrition, two essential components of health and safety. Families caring for aging parents or disabled family members will have greater reassurance that essential needs are met. On the individual level, this legislation protects some of the state’s most vulnerable residents, ensuring they do not have to choose between heating their homes and putting food on the table—an impossible decision no Marylander should have to make.

Senate Bill 461 directly reflects the Church’s call to care for the poor and marginalized and to prioritize their basic needs above all else. Ensuring that elderly and disabled individuals can safely live, eat, and remain in their homes embodies the principles of solidarity and the preferential option for the poor. This bill affirms our collective responsibility to safeguard the dignity of those too often overlooked and ensures that compassion remains at the heart of public policy.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **Senate Bill 461**.

SB0461 - crossover bill - FAV - Heat and Eat Progr

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0461_Crossover Bill
RichardKaplowitz_FAV
03/31/2026
Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON CROSSOVER BILL SB#0461 -
POSITION: FAVORABLE

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Heat and Eat Program – Eligibility

TO: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in favor of crossover bill SB#0461, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Heat and Eat Program – Eligibility

The [Heat and Eat \(H-EAT\) program](#) (often called H-EAT) is a state-level initiative in several U.S. states, **including Maryland**, that increases Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. By providing a small, nominal LIHEAP (Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program) payment, it allows households to qualify for the highest Standard Utility Allowance (SUA), thereby maximizing their monthly food benefits. ¹

The program ensures that households, particularly seniors and those with disabilities, can afford both utilities and food, as the higher utility deduction reduces countable income, thereby increasing the food assistance amount.

This bill expands the program into households based on additional categories that will qualify them for entry into the program.

This bill will make this happen by altering the eligibility requirements for the Heat and Eat Program within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in the Department of Human Services to require a household to include an elderly or disabled individual.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on crossover bill SB#0461.

¹ Google AI Search “heat and eat program in snap”

