

Maryland House
Appropriations Committee
Room 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 2, 2024

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

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to urge you to support HB0666 which would enact a state-funded SNAP Supplemental Benefit. We would like to express our gratitude to Delegates Shetty, Edelson, Kaufman, and Solomon for sponsoring this crucial legislation. There are currently 701,000 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants in Maryland, still well over pre-pandemic levels and steadily increasing since the end of the federal public health emergency in May 2023. During 2023, SNAP lost multiple waivers that increased program accessibility and benefit adequacy, including the most significant expansion, SNAP Emergency Allotments (EAs). EAs provided a maximized benefit allotment for eligible households during a time of exacerbated hardship. The expiration of EAs in March 2023 came at a time when Marylanders' economic situation was not significantly better than the first two years of COVID-19, and was compounded by the end of expansions and flexibilities in other vital programs such as Medicaid and housing assistance. It is our belief that the state must act to increase the minimum benefit for Marylanders on SNAP to \$95 a month to ensure households have the means to put food on the table for themselves and their families.

The loss of EAs led to a "hunger cliff" for many Marylanders. Between March 2020 to March 2023, a household of one on SNAP would have received \$281 a month. Larger households received maximized benefits corresponding to their household size. This was a massive boon to families that were experiencing job loss, reduced working hours, and the uncertainty of navigating a global pandemic. When emergency allotments ended, many families and individuals came crashing down to dramatically lower amounts, some to the federal minimum of \$23 a month.

As a whole, the state lost \$70 million per month in federal dollars when EAs ended, an annual loss of \$840 million. This not only had an effect on households relying on SNAP, but on the food system as a whole. It is estimated that for every \$1 of SNAP, \$1.50 is generated in the local economy. This estimated loss totals to \$1.26 billion in Maryland alone. Fewer SNAP dollars in the community means less revenue for grocery stores, corner stores, and farmers markets.

The solution to the hunger cliff has been explored by our neighbors to the north and south. The District of Columbia recently passed and funded "Give SNAP a Raise," which provides a 10% across-the-board increase to all SNAP households' benefits. New Jersey increased their SNAP minimum to \$50 a month during 2021 and further increased it to \$95 a month in March 2023, just as emergency allotments were coming to an end, meaning no one on SNAP in New Jersey receives less than \$95 a month. This remains the highest minimum benefit increase in the country. It's time for Maryland to join other states and become a leader in SNAP benefit adequacy.

Thank you for your ongoing work to ensure not only a strong recovery from this pandemic, but a future in which all of Maryland's most basic needs are secure. Your support on providing a Supplemental Benefit to Marylanders is crucial in ensuring the greater health and wellbeing of all Marylanders.

Sincerely,

Ad Astra Farms LLC
Ag Business Specialist Garrett County MD, AFFA
Allegany County Farmers Market
Allen Chapel AME Outreach
American Heart Association
Anne Arundel County Food Bank, Inc.
Baltimore City Food Policy and Planning Division
Beechwood Orchards
Blue Heron Elementary School
Capital Area Food Bank
CASH Campaign of Maryland
Changing Lives Community Development Corporation
Charles Koiner Conservancy for Urban Farming
College Park Community Food Bank
Community FarmShare
Community Support Systems, Inc.
Conflict Cuisine
Critical Issues Forum
Crossroads Community Food Network
DC Center
DeBerry Farm Fresh Produce
Deep Creek Farmers Market
Fort Washington Forward Farmers Market
Frederick County Food Council
Gaithersburg HELP
Greenbelt Farmers Market
Homeless Persons Representation Project, Inc.
ImpactHumanity Inc
Kent County MD Local Food Council
Kingdom Kare Inc
Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services, Inc.
League of Women Voters of Maryland
Lewis Orchards
Manna Food Center
Maryland Center On Economic Policy
Maryland Food Bank
Maryland Hunger Solutions
Maryland Latinos Unidos
Maryland Market Money Program, Southern MD Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC)
Milk Lady Farmers Markets

Mission of Love Charities
Montgomery County Food Council
Montgomery County Food Council Food Security Community Advisory Board
Outreach & Missions Director ALC
Prince George's County Council
Prince George's County Food Equity Council
Queens Care HOLLA
Riverdale Park Farmers Market, Inc.
Rooted Therapeutix
Shepherd's Table
SMADC
So What Else
Solutions in Hometown Connections
St Michaels Farmers Market
Strength to Love II
Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op
The Plantation - Urban Farm
Upcounty Hub