Solving Hunger and Improving Nutrition in Maryland: The First Five Years
Dear Friends:

The continued existence of hunger and food hardship in one of the world’s most prosperous countries and in the nation’s wealthiest state is unacceptable. It not only offends our sense of morality and fairness; it also harms the economy, lowers productivity, undermines children’s education, increases health care costs and wastes human potential.

That’s why solving hunger must be an imperative for our society. This is not a distant dream; it is eminently achievable in a relatively short period of time. What’s needed is not some esoteric policy or technological invention, but rather the political, economic, and social will of a people and their leaders.

Maryland Hunger Solutions was founded in 2007 to make this happen in this rich state, and ever since, we have worked tenaciously to put into place all of the elements needed to ensure that every Marylander receives affordable, nutritious food each and every day.

Combining education, advocacy, outreach and collaboration, we are working to bring all stakeholders together behind a bold, comprehensive agenda to connect all eligible state residents to the appropriate food and nutrition programs; to improve the programs’ operations; to expand access to affordable, healthy food; and to change the underlying conditions that cause food hardship in the first place.

In just five years, Maryland Hunger Solutions has made a profound, tangible difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of Marylanders. Our work has led to substantial increases in participation in critical federal nutrition programs, including food stamps/SNAP (known as the Food Supplement Program in Maryland), the School Breakfast Program, the At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program and the Summer Food Service Program, as well as significantly greater use of farmers’ markets by people at risk of food hardship.

These successes have built a solid platform for even greater progress in the future. For that, we must thank all of the generous individuals and organizations that have supported this work. As we look back at the past five years and set our goals and strategies for the next five years, we believe that a hunger-free Maryland is well within our grasp.

On behalf of Maryland Hunger Solutions, we pledge to keep moving forward relentlessly toward our shared goal in the years to come.

Best regards,

Jim Weill  
President,  
Food Research and Action Center

Cathy Demeroto  
Director,  
Maryland Hunger Solutions
The Problem: Hunger Amid Plenty

Maryland is the wealthiest state in the country, yet one in every eight households struggles with food insecurity amid this sea of plenty.

The state has large jurisdictions with high poverty rates, such as Baltimore City and Prince George’s County, while even wealthier counties, like Howard, Montgomery and Calvert, have significant areas where many low-income residents live.

The combination of large concentrations of poverty within certain communities and an above-average cost of living stretches many family budgets to the breaking point to pay for housing, put gas in their cars, cover their utility bills, and buy food. Sometimes, families are forced to make choices that lead to hunger and poor nutrition. Children go without meals or parents are forced to serve meals that aren’t healthy. Seniors and people with disabilities must choose between paying for food or for medicine.

Food insecurity occurs in inner city neighborhoods, in a growing number of suburban communities, and in more isolated rural areas. It also disproportionately strikes African American and Latino and other immigrant communities.

Hunger and food insecurity must be solved, both for the moral reason that they are unacceptable in a prosperous society, and for the practical reason that the resulting costs last a lifetime. These costs include obesity, poor academic achievement, multiple health and dental health problems, long-term economic losses, low birth weight, and mental health issues. Individuals and communities suffer significantly from the ill effects.
The Mission: Solving Hunger

Maryland Hunger Solutions seeks to end hunger, improve nutrition, and promote the well-being of Marylanders in need by spreading best practices through education, advocacy, outreach, and collaboration.

Founded by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) in 2007, Maryland Hunger Solutions works to create a state free of hunger and poverty and their ill effects. Its approach is based on fully utilizing and improving federal nutrition programs so that all Marylanders in need are receiving the assistance for which they are eligible, while also working to transform the economic and social policies that keep people mired in poverty, because without poverty, hunger will largely cease to be a problem.

Maryland Hunger Solutions promotes the adoption of best practices to increase participation, to ensure that the federal nutrition programs are fully implemented, to research and analyze the extent of hunger and food hardship, to raise awareness through education and outreach, and to advocate for needed policy changes to better serve those in need.

The Solution: Maximizing Nutrition Program Benefits

The solution to hunger in Maryland involves a combination of making federal nutrition programs work as intended, ensuring that all eligible people are participating, and spearheading other changes to ensure that access to healthy, affordable food is universal.

When struggling families, senior citizens, and other people in need receive benefits under food stamps/SNAP (the Food Supplement Program), they can use normal commercial channels to purchase food for themselves and their dependents.

When pregnant women, infants and young children receive Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program benefits, they are less hungry and better nourished.

When students receive school breakfasts and school lunches, they become well-nourished, healthier, and learn better.

When children whose parents’ jobs require them to work long hours receive suppers at their after-school care centers, they no longer go to bed with empty stomachs.

MDHUNGERSOLUTIONS.ORG
Key Federal Nutrition Programs

The federal government’s historic, bipartisan commitment to preventing hunger and improving nutrition rests primarily on these seven programs:

• **Food Stamps/SNAP**, known as the **Food Supplement Program (FSP)** in Maryland, is the cornerstone of the food security safety net. It helps lower-income individuals and families buy food, it lifts people out of poverty and it expands during a recession to meet rising need and serve as an economic stimulus.

• **The School Lunch and Breakfast Programs** boost children’s health and educational achievement, improve school discipline, reduce school nurse visits and improve nutrition throughout the school years.

• **The At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program** reimburses afterschool care providers for nutritious meals, thereby supporting programs that keep children safe and advance their development in the critical hours after school lets out, during weekends, and on school vacations.

• **The Summer Food Service Program** provides children who receive free breakfasts and lunches at school with continued good nutrition over the summer.

• **WIC** has helped pregnant women, infants and young children receive proper nutrition ever since its founding in 1974, reducing infant mortality and low birth weight, and dramatically improving child health.

• **The Child and Adult Care Food Program** funds nutritious meals for children in Head Start, child care centers, and homeless and domestic violence shelters.

Today, Maryland Hunger Solutions has established itself as a pillar of the Maryland and Baltimore City anti-poverty, child advocacy and social justice communities, forging relationships with federal, state, and local agencies and other stakeholders, and making considerable progress toward reducing hunger among low-income Marylanders. It has become the thought leader and central convener on nutrition and anti-hunger policy issues in Maryland — the key source of research, data, and anti-hunger policy ideas for the legislature, state agencies, nonprofits and other stakeholders to adopt, and the hub of a diverse group of partnerships and coalitions.
The Outcome: Proven Results

In just five years, Maryland Hunger Solutions has built a strong track record in increasing participation in food programs, reducing hunger, and improving nutrition. It has played a central role in:

- **More than doubling participation** in the [Food Supplement Program](https://www.fsp.org) (SNAP/food stamps) from 342,095 in October 2007 to 747,316 in October 2012 — an increase of **118 percent**.

- **Reaching tens of thousands of Marylanders** with information about eligibility for the [Food Supplement Program](https://www.fsp.org), the application process, and ways to make FSP dollars stretch.

- **Increasing average daily participation** among low-income children in the [School Breakfast Program](https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-breakfast) statewide by **more than 45 percent**, from 90,815 in the 2007-2008 school year to 132,336 in the 2011-2012 school year.

“[My son] was fed while he was [attending SuperKids Summer Camp] both breakfast and lunch. It was a relief for me because it was very, very hard making ends meet and so Monday through Friday I did not have to worry about him being able to get food. It’s a great program.”

— TAMARA TYRELL, BALTIMORE

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**Food Supplement Program Participation**

![Graph showing Food Supplement Program participation from Oct'07 to Oct'12](image-url)
“Maryland Hunger Solutions is committed to improving access to healthy school meals and has been a catalyst in expanding the number of low-income children throughout the state who are receiving school breakfast. Maryland Hunger Solutions’ efforts are an important contribution to improving the overall health and academic performance of our children.”

— ROBIN ZIEGLER, CHIEF, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY NUTRITION PROGRAMS BRANCH, MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

• Spearheading increases of more than 200 percent in the number of students receiving free, nutritious school breakfasts in targeted schools in Baltimore City and six Maryland counties between 2010 and 2012 through the launch of the First Class Breakfast Initiative and the work of collaborating with the Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom.

• Implementing Maryland’s At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program for children in afterschool programs. Participation more than tripled, skyrocketing from 3,917 per day students in February 2010 to 14,486 students per day at its peak in February 2012.

• Increasing the number of children served daily through the Summer Food Service Program in Maryland by over 28 percent and expanding the number of summer meal sites from 1,102 to 1,235 over four years, helping to prevent hunger among children who receive breakfasts and lunches during the school year but would otherwise have no alternative source of nutritious food when school is out.

• Enabling low-income Marylanders to make more than $150,000 in purchases of fresh produce at farmers’ markets since 2010 through our Farmers’ Market project.

• Producing the first and ongoing annual county-by-county analyses of summer food and school breakfast participation in the state’s history.

Together, we will reach our goal of ending hunger in Maryland once and for all.
The Strategy: Identifying and Obtaining Widespread Adoption of Best Practices in the Fight Against Hunger

Maryland Hunger Solutions has become the key source of public education, research, data, and anti-hunger policy ideas for the legislature, state agencies, schools, cities, nonprofits and other stakeholders to adopt, and the hub of a diverse group of partnerships and coalitions.

Maryland Hunger Solutions achieved these results and continues to seek to fulfill its mission by identifying and promoting best practices that are proven solutions to hunger, food hardship and inadequate nutrition. Maryland Hunger Solutions identifies the strategies with the most leverage and works to implement these solutions quickly, supporting organizations in their efforts to bring these practices to scale.

Through education, advocacy, outreach, and collaboration, Maryland Hunger Solutions is raising awareness each day about proven solutions to ending hunger and supporting a statewide network of organizations to adopt them.

“Sometimes I was short buying his food. With that money now, I can pay my other bills. It saves a lot of money. It helps a lot.”

— LILIAN COLIN, PARENT AND RECENT FOOD SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM RECIPIENT FROM BALTIMORE, “VOICES OF HUNGER AND HOPE.”
Maryland Hunger Solutions is leading the charge in the fight against hunger in Maryland. Education and advocacy efforts like its Paper Apple Campaign and the Fighting Hunger in Maryland Conference are raising public awareness of hunger and poverty and making significant progress in improving the nutrition, health, and well-being of Maryland children and families.

– KEVIN CONCANNON, USDA UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD, NUTRITION AND CONSUMER SERVICES

Many people are unaware of the presence of hunger and food insecurity in their midst. This is especially true in a state like Maryland because it ranks high in overall measures of wealth – having the highest median household income of any state. That’s why a starting point for spearheading positive change is educating policy makers, the media, and public about the extent of the problem and the right solutions.

Maryland Hunger Solutions’ education efforts include:

- **Convening the annual Fighting Hunger in Maryland Conference.** As chair of the Maryland Food Access and Nutrition Network, Maryland Hunger Solutions planned and convened the inaugural Fighting Hunger in Maryland Conference in Baltimore in 2011. The first of its kind in Maryland, this conference brings together leaders from across the state to collaborate on efforts to end hunger. This conference has now become an annual event attended by hundreds of anti-hunger advocates, service providers, clients, and federal, state, and local policy makers from across the state.

- **Launching Voices of Hunger and Hope.** Hunger in Maryland has nearly one million faces — and voices. And each person has a story to tell. Maryland Hunger Solutions created Voices of Hunger and Hope — a forum for people to talk about the challenges they face and how they manage or overcome their hardships, as well as an opportunity to share their successes. Since April 2011, it has been talking with people who have benefitted from each of the federal nutrition programs as well as partners who serve those in need. These interviews are providing valuable insights into the struggles that many Marylanders encounter and the importance of federal nutrition programs in helping to eradicate hunger, increase access to healthy foods, and move people out of poverty.

- **Issuing landmark publications on the state of hunger in Maryland and how to solve it.** As part of our educational focus, Maryland Hunger Solutions regularly issues reports providing policy makers, the media, service providers, educators, and the public statistical information about food hardship challenges and solutions. Its monthly newsletter highlights a range of information, and special reports focus on key topics such as participation rates for the Afterschool Meal Program, Summer Nutrition Programs, and the School Breakfast Program, both across the state and in every county.
With FRAC, it issues an annual report comparing hunger in Maryland and in the Baltimore area to rates in other states and Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA’s). Maryland Hunger Solutions has also produced a series of guides for service providers, advocates and recipients on how to effectively conduct outreach and participate in the Food Supplement Program, Summer Food Service Program, School Breakfast Program, At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program, and on the use of nutrition assistance programs at farmers’ markets.

“Maryland Hunger Solutions does an exceptional job raising awareness of hunger and connecting Marylanders to vital nutrition assistance programs. I appreciated the opportunity to participate in the Food Stamp Challenge and to partner with Maryland Hunger Solutions in the fight to eradicate hunger in our state.”

— BILL MCCARTHY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CATHOLIC CHARITIES - BALTIMORE

**The Paper Apple Campaign**

Maryland Hunger Solutions’ Paper Apple Campaign gives people across the state the opportunity to draw attention to hunger and to build a foundation for a hunger-free Maryland. Thousands of people wrote their ideas about how to achieve a hunger-free Maryland on paper apples which were used to form a map of Maryland and displayed in Annapolis during the 2012 legislative session. Campaign participants were also encouraged to post pictures of their paper apples on Facebook and tweet them to @MarylandHunger. The campaign demonstrates how widespread support is for protecting and improving federal nutrition programs and other anti-hunger efforts. It will continue to collect apples and the paper apple map will continue to be displayed in key locations across the state, and its range of ideas will be shared with policymakers.

- **Organizing the Annual Maryland Food Stamp Challenge** during which hundreds of public officials, faith and community-based leaders, and civic activists in Maryland spend a week feeding themselves solely on a food stamp (FSP) budget. This has a profound impact on participants as they experience first-hand the struggles of FSP beneficiaries and learn how food stamp benefits need to be increased. More than 200 people participated in the 2012 challenge, including elected officials and government agencies and nonprofit leaders.

- **Maximizing the impact of outreach efforts through mapping.** For the Food Supplement Program and the Summer Food Service Program, Maryland Hunger Solutions was able to target high need areas with low participation. For the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Maryland Hunger Solutions mapped non-participating, licensed, non-profit child care centers, cross-referencing this with demographic data showing the concentration of lower-income families.
Advocacy

Solving hunger requires strong advocacy to enact needed policy changes in the legislative and executive branches at the federal, state and local government levels, and to improve the implementation of nutrition programs.

Maryland Hunger Solutions’ advocacy efforts include:

• **Grassroots mobilization.** As the Paper Apple campaign (see sidebar p. 9) shows, it works to galvanize public support for stronger and more effective anti-hunger efforts at all levels of government, ensuring that Marylanders make their voices heard in key policy battles. Maryland Hunger Solutions also works with other organizations, service providers and stakeholders to build broad-based, diverse anti-hunger coalitions.

• **State-level advocacy.** Maryland Hunger Solutions is in regular communication with the Governor’s office, all relevant government agencies, and the General Assembly pushing for improvements in anti-hunger programs, policies and funding. For example, Maryland Hunger Solutions led the charge to increase funding for the Maryland Meals for Achievement Program — a state program that supports in-classroom breakfast — and successfully persuaded the Governor to include a 20 percent increase ($560,000) in funding in the FY 2013 budget, which the General Assembly approved. Maryland Hunger Solutions, with the support of partners, also successfully sought a 1.8 million dollar increase in MMFA in the FY 2014 budget, which is pending before the General Assembly.

• **Federal advocacy.** Maryland Hunger Solutions keeps the state’s two senators and eight members of Congress informed of steps they should take to strengthen SNAP and the other federal nutrition programs. Maryland Hunger Solutions also persuaded Congress, through advocacy with Rep. Donna Edwards, to include Maryland as one of only 13 pilot states for the At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program. Based on the success of this special program it was extended to afterschool programs in all 50 states in the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.

However, passing legislation and appropriating funds are only part of the battle. The ultimate effectiveness of food and nutrition programs is determined by how they are implemented at the state, county and municipal levels. Using the real-world experience of people suffering from food insecurity, Maryland Hunger Solutions works closely with agency administrators to ensure that eligible participants are being reached and that the process of applying for and receiving benefits is simplified and made “consumer-friendly.” For example, Maryland Hunger Solutions is:

• **Improving FSP’s policies and practices,** working closely with the Maryland Department of Human Resources and key policy makers to strengthen service delivery and ease barriers to participation. This involves monitoring

“For many of our kids, it’s a supper program; this is, in fact, their dinner. They go home to no meals... [Participating in the Afterschool Meal program is] a fairly simple process, and the truth is, even if it were a burden, which it is not, I think to benefit our members, our youth, I think it’s something that has to be done.”

— MARTIN BLAKE, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF ANNAPOLIS AND ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
program operations in key counties and suggesting improvements, meeting with state and local officials, ensuring that the Department of Human Resources’ website provides correct eligibility information, co-producing fliers to promote allowable deductions for eligibility determination, and helping the agency reduce error rates and improve staff training. In addition, Maryland Hunger Solutions successfully advocated for the Department of Human Resources to implement telephone interviews, expanded categorical eligibility that allows FSP to reach more needy people with less paperwork, easing red tape by reopening applications when cases were closed for non-eligibility reasons, document imaging, and automatic replacement of FSP benefits after disasters including Superstorm Sandy.

- **Implementing the new Afterschool Meal Program at an extremely high rate.** Maryland Hunger Solutions conducted extensive outreach and provided training to increase participation; held Afterschool Meal Program open houses in conjunction with other members of the Governor’s Partnership to End Childhood Hunger; and prepared, updated and distributed an afterschool meals toolkit, *Your Guide to the Afterschool Meal Program*, designed to help care providers start and maintain successful programs. Maryland Hunger Solutions advocated for more afterschool programs to be approved to provide nutritious meals to children through this program, and worked with the Maryland Department of Mental Hygiene and the Maryland State Department of Education to remove other barriers, as well (see page 14).

- **Expanding enrollment in WIC** by partnering with the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) to help it adopt one-year WIC certification for children to maximize services and minimize paperwork. Prior to this change, children had to be recertified for program eligibility every six months, imposing a significant burden on many families — one reason why an estimated 30,000 low-income eligible children have not been receiving WIC services. In conjunction with DHMH, Maryland Hunger Solutions is making an effort to reduce this number and reach more families by conducting outreach and promoting the one year eligibility option. Maryland Hunger Solutions also advocates to protect WIC at the federal level.
Solving hunger requires not only having the right programs in place; it requires ensuring that everyone who is eligible actually receives their benefits. One big reason for the persistence of food hardship is the fact that a large percentage of eligible people do not even know they qualify for benefits. Another is that the application process can be overly burdensome.

Maryland Hunger Solutions is working to overcome these hurdles by:

• Conducting aggressive outreach to potential Food Supplement Program (FSP) participants. Maryland Hunger Solutions is waging a comprehensive campaign to make state residents aware they may be eligible for the FSP and inform them about how to apply for benefits. These efforts have been especially critical in recent years because the recession and high unemployment have made many people eligible for benefits who have never considered this possibility and always thought of FSP as being for someone else.

  Maryland Hunger Solutions’ outreach includes distributing materials in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese; making numerous presentations, including to the clients of emergency food programs; hosting webinars to help organizations navigate SAIL (Maryland’s online application system); providing information at various locations such as senior centers and housing complexes, grocery stores, immigrant service organizations, and state and county fairs; and working directly with clients to address application barriers and help them apply for the program.

  In addition, Maryland Hunger Solutions published in English and Spanish and disseminated the Guide to Getting Food Stamps in Maryland, providing valuable information about the FSP aimed at eligible individuals and families, service providers, clergy and congregations, businesses and other stakeholders. Equally important, Maryland Hunger Solutions has built partnerships with other organizations that regularly serve potential FSP participants, helping them make FSP information and application assistance a routine part of their dealings. These include Volunteer Income Tax Assistance coordinators who operate free tax preparation sites, Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland, grocery stores in lower-income neighborhoods, the faith-based community, Department of Social Services offices, and emergency food groups. In honor of its successful effort to offer FSP outreach at tax assistance sites in Montgomery County during the 2012 tax season, Maryland Hunger Solutions was named the 2012 recipient of the Henry L. Dixon Community Action Award for Organizational Achievement by the county’s Community Action Board. Many of the clients served were immigrants – part of a population traditionally considered hard to reach.

• Conducting outreach to increase awareness of the national School Breakfast Program among students, parents and school staff district-wide. Maryland Hunger Solutions has been
working to greatly expand participation in school breakfast through alternative delivery models. Maryland Hunger Solutions helped to increase participation significantly in Baltimore City and six counties (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery and Prince George’s) with low rates of breakfast participation through the First Class Breakfast Initiative and Partners for Breakfast in the Classroom.

- **Reaching out to families and providers about free summer meals.** Children who receive school breakfasts and lunches need to receive good food and nutrition in June, July and August, too. The federal Summer Food Service Program can provide these benefits to children through many organizations, including summer day camp and child care providers, schools, and churches. Yet, this has been one of the most under-utilized federal nutrition programs because many providers are unaware of the program and because of artificial barriers to enrollment. That’s why Maryland Hunger Solutions contacts youth program providers every summer to spread the word that food and nutrition benefits are available, and to provide assistance with the application process by disseminating *Your Guide to the Summer Food Service Program*. Maryland Hunger Solutions also has canvassed numerous low-income neighborhoods surrounding summer meal sites to get the word out to families that children can receive free nutritious meals during the summer months. At the state level, Maryland Hunger Solutions partnered with Antonio Freeman, a Baltimore native and former wide receiver for the Super Bowl Champion Green Bay Packers, to promote the program with public service announcements and with a literacy challenge at select summer meal sites in Baltimore City.

- **Launching a mobile meals pilot project** in two counties in partnership with community and faith-based organizations. Maryland Hunger Solutions partnered with Catholic Charities of Baltimore and the Family League of Baltimore City to identify faith-based organizations in targeted communities whose areas could benefit from a summer meal site. With the help of a mobile meals van donated by the vendor, three church-based sites in underserved, low-income neighborhoods in Baltimore City served more than 6,000 meals to children during the summer of 2011. Maryland Hunger Solutions also partnered with Anne Arundel County Public Schools during the summer of 2012 to utilize a school bus to provide daily meals to between 200 and 400 children in low-income neighborhoods.

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**School Breakfast Participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Breakfast Participation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>43,789</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>45,789</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>45,689</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>46,899</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>51,389</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Breakfast Average Daily Participation Total**
- **Breakfast Participation as a Percent of Lunch Participation**
Collaboration

There’s a role for everyone in the fight against hunger. All organizations — public and private — that touch the lives of low-income children, families and communities must be engaged in the effort to end hunger and improve nutrition. Maryland Hunger Solutions has been bringing together diverse groups and building coalitions to take more coordinated, systematic and effective action to ensure that all state residents receive the food and nutrition they need.

These efforts include:

• Partnering with AARP Maryland, the Maryland Department of Aging, and the Maryland Department of Human Resources to establish the first Maryland Senior Hunger Month in February 2012. Through a Tele-Town Hall and other outreach events, the combined efforts aimed to raise public awareness about hunger among seniors, and reach more seniors who may be eligible for nutrition programs.

• Tackling barriers to participation in the Food Supplement Program by collaborating with the Maryland Department of Human Resources and various organizations across the state to improve access for more Marylanders, including non-English speaking residents, and by partnering with grocers, like Food Depot and ShopRite, and the Department of Human Resources to offer FSP outreach in stores.

• Serving on the Maryland State Department of Education’s steering committee for implementation of the federal Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act focusing on increasing access to school meals and improving nutrition education, the cafeteria environment and culinary choices.

• Supporting the expansion of the Afterschool Meal Program by working with the State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) to address the issue of inconsistent health certification requirements at the local level. Maryland Hunger Solutions reviewed current regulations and worked with DHMH to develop materials and trainings that provide guidance to local health departments and afterschool programs to ensure that more children receive hot suppers that they need with rules that protect them but don’t unnecessarily burden providers.

“Maryland Hunger Solutions is an outstanding collaborator as we work together to make our Food Supplement Program an exemplary model for how to provide supplemental nutrition benefits to all populations. They provide hands-on experience and deep insight in helping us reach those who need our assistance as efficiently, effectively and compassionately as possible.”

— ROSEMARY MALONE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION, MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
Maryland Hunger Solutions serves as the voice for Marylanders who struggle with hunger and poverty on a number of state-wide coalitions, including:

**Maryland Hunger Solutions chairs:**

- The **Maryland Food Access and Nutrition Network** (MFANN), a statewide coalition of federal, state and local government agencies, faith and community-based organizations and advocates that works to improve access to nutrition assistance programs and improve nutrition for low-income Marylanders. Under Maryland Hunger Solutions’ leadership, MFANN launched the annual statewide anti-hunger conference noted previously, and it organizes a large-scale annual outreach event and regular workshops, webinars, meetings, and activities with a focus on meeting the needs of hard-to-reach populations, including seniors, Latinos, rural populations, and the working poor. Maryland Hunger Solutions ensured that MFANN incorporates FSP outreach into all of its events, and it has launched the first steps toward integrating public services — including FSP enrollment — at public libraries.

- The **Farmers’ Market Collaborative**, a quarterly forum that brings together government agencies, non-profit organizations, and farmers’ market managers to maximize farmers’ markets’ and stands’ effectiveness as sources of healthy food for low-income Baltimore residents. The Collaborative focuses on building the capacity of Baltimore-area farmers’ markets and farm stands to accept federal nutrition benefits (see page 19).

**Maryland Hunger Solutions serves as a core anti-hunger advisor to:**

- The **Governor’s Partnership to End Childhood Hunger**, created in November 2008, a coalition of agencies and organizations dedicated to ending childhood hunger in Maryland by 2015.

- The **Baltimore City Partnership to End Childhood Hunger**, convened by Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake in 2012 and modeled after the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland. This partnership engages local agencies, community leaders, elected officials and other non-profit organizations in concerted strategies to end childhood hunger by increasing participation in the federal nutrition programs and expanding nutrition education for low-income residents.
Maryland Hunger Solutions serves as the anti-hunger expert to:

- **Maryland Alliance for the Poor**, a coalition of service providers, faith groups, and other organizations working together to advocate for statewide policies and programs that help Marylanders living in or near poverty.

- **Welfare Advocates**, a statewide coalition of community-based organizations, advocacy groups, faith communities, and consumers, whose mission is to educate and advocate for an adequate safety net and public policies that empower families to become self-sufficient.

- The **Maryland Healthy Eating and Active Lifestyle Coalition**, which works to increase the number of residents who eat healthfully and exercise.

- The **Maryland Fresh Food Retail Task Force**, convened in 2011 by The Food Trust, which brings together state and local agencies, organizations and retailers to increase access to fresh, affordable food in areas that are underserved. Maryland Hunger Solutions co-leads a work group on SNAP/FSP.

- The **State WIC Advisory Council**, which ensures that the WIC Program operates efficiently and is available to all those eligible in Maryland.

- The **Language Access Task Force**, a group of organizations dedicated to improving access to social services in Maryland by clients who speak languages other than English. The task force works to remove barriers to nutrition program participation by increasing the use of interpreter services, strengthening cultural competency in Department of Social Services offices, and improving awareness about program eligibility for immigrants.

- The **Baltimore Food Policy Advisory Committee** (Food PAC) — composed of stakeholders in Baltimore's food access, production, distribution and consumption system — which works to increase access to healthy, affordable food in Baltimore City by implementing Baltimore Food Policy Task Force recommendations.

- The **Port Towns Community Health Partnership**, a collaboration of community residents, government agencies, organizations and funders working together to support healthy living in the Port Towns. Maryland Hunger Solutions is working with the Partnership to create a Food Policy Council in Prince George’s County.

- The **Montgomery County Food Policy Council**, formed in 2012, a partnership of government and community organizations working together to increase access to healthy, affordable food in Montgomery County.

Maryland Hunger Solutions collaborates with many additional organizations and agencies and has served on a multitude of task forces, committees and workgroups as the leading anti-hunger organization in Maryland.

Maryland Hunger Solutions gratefully thanks all of our dedicated partners in the effort to end hunger in our state. Please visit our website to see a full list of organizations.
Maryland Hunger Solutions is privileged to be a key coordinator and partner in the work of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Hunger-Free Communities Program through its collaboration with the Governor’s Partnership to End Childhood Hunger. The program is designed to advance holistic, innovative efforts to end hunger at the community level. In Maryland, it focuses on eight counties ( Allegany, Anne Arundel, Caroline, Carroll, Dorchester, Frederick, Garrett, and Montgomery ) where people are at particular risk of hunger.

The Hunger-Free Communities program in Maryland began in March of 2011. Since its inception, the program has yielded participation increases in the Food Supplement Program, School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program, and the At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program in the eight target counties. Maryland Hunger Solutions has worked on all federal nutrition programs in each of the target counties through the grant, generating community support for the programs and engaging in collaborative efforts at the federal, state and local levels to maximize participation. Through engagement of local community leaders, Maryland Hunger Solutions worked with each county to identify their specific needs and challenges, and then develop a plan for ending hunger that was unique to their jurisdiction. This approach also created a sustainable model for ending hunger at the community level after the Hunger-Free Communities program has ended.

Evidence of this program’s success can be found in each of the eight counties in any number of ways. One of the benefits of the Hunger-Free Communities program was the ability to work in some of the most rural counties in Maryland, many of which often generated the most innovative solutions to common participation barriers. Garrett County is one such example. Located in the far western corner of Maryland’s panhandle, nearly one in five children in Garrett County lives in poverty, yet many families eligible for assistance are not receiving it.

As the 2010-2011 school year was about to end, Maryland Hunger Solutions convened a meeting of all stakeholders in the county, at which participants learned that, due to deep funding cuts, there would be no Summer Food Service Program sites operating anywhere in Garrett County. Over the course of just two hours, meeting participants pulled together three summer feeding sites with donations of time, space and resources from each person at the table. While it was impossible to open as many sites as existed during the previous summer, all stakeholders came together to ensure that the county’s neediest children would be fed during the summer of 2011. This partnership was replicated the following year when Maryland Hunger Solutions worked with stakeholders to start a summer site at the Community Aquatic Center located at Garrett College, with the goal of reaching even more eligible children at a centralized location during the summer. The site operated the entire summer and in the first three weeks, more children were served at the one site than had been served the entire previous summer. By the end of summer 2012, more than 3,000 meals were served, reaching an average of 62 children each day.

To read more success stories from the Hunger-Free Communities program in Maryland, visit Maryland Hunger Solutions’ website and click on “Hunger-Free Communities.”
While hunger is often viewed primarily as a problem affecting low-income families with children, another group disproportionately likely to be under-nourished is the elderly. In fact, nearly one in five low-income Maryland seniors struggles with hunger, giving the state the eighth highest rate of food insecurity among the low-income elderly in our nation.

A major reason why is that nearly three of every four Maryland seniors who may be eligible for FSP benefits are not participating, according to Maryland Hunger Solutions estimates. That is due to many causes, including a lack of information about the program, problems with transportation, and other barriers.

To overcome these hurdles and enroll as many eligible senior citizens as possible, Maryland Hunger Solutions has forged new, collaborative partnerships with:

- **AARP Maryland**, to reach its huge membership in the state. Collaborations include the Tele-Town Hall noted on page 14, disaster relief work, and annual outreach events such as the Baltimore County Baby Boomer Expo which enable Maryland Hunger Solutions to provide thousands with information on applying for FSP benefits.

- **Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland**, to reach lower-income senior citizens who may be eligible for the FSP but who are not yet receiving benefits. Maryland Hunger Solutions partnered with Meals on Wheels to deliver a mailing to all clients informing them of potential FSP eligibility, and initiated a collaborative referral system so that all Meals on Wheels clients will be screened for FSP eligibility at intake and referred to Maryland Hunger Solutions for application assistance. Finally, it also provides informational materials on FSP to all of the agency’s clients.

- **Baltimore City Health Department’s Office of Aging & CARE Services**, to participate in the 2013 “Waxter Wisdom” workshop series at the Waxter Senior Center in Baltimore City by presenting a workshop and conducting outreach. During these monthly workshops, Maryland Hunger Solutions will provide information on senior hunger, healthy eating for seniors on a low-cost budget, and information on FSP. It also will provide FSP application assistance with the goal of reaching hundreds of seniors in need.

"Maryland Hunger Solutions is performing an essential public service in reaching out to older Marylanders experiencing or at risk of hunger and connecting them with the benefits they need. We are proud to be a partner in this vital effort."
— HANK GREENBERG, STATE DIRECTOR, AARP MARYLAND

"In the aftermath of SuperStorm Sandy, Maryland Hunger Solutions led advocacy efforts to bring Disaster SNAP to the residents of Somerset County. We are truly grateful for their advocacy, resources, expertise and compassion. Maryland Hunger Solutions’ commitment to serving communities in need is commendable."
— DOUG TAYLOR, SOMERSET COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
Improving Neighborhood Access to Fresh Food

Receiving food aid, whether through food stamps, WIC or another program, is essential for families facing food insecurity, but it is not enough. They must be able to purchase adequate amounts of healthy, nutritious food with that assistance to be healthy and productive.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case. A major cause of poor nutrition and obesity among populations at risk of hunger is the lack of access to affordable, fresh, healthy food. Many low-income people without easy access to transportation must buy their groceries from convenience stores selling few fruits and vegetables, and stocking packaged foods that are typically high in fat, sodium and calories. In the few instances where corner stores do sell healthier foods, such as fresh produce or milk, the prices often are much higher than in other neighborhoods.

Maryland Hunger Solutions is spearheading the movement to solve this problem in the state by bringing fresh produce to lower-income areas and by expanding the use of the FSP, WIC and Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program benefits at farmers’ markets. The critical breakthrough has been getting farmers’ markets to accept electronic benefits transfer (EBT) payments because FSP benefits are more substantial and all FSP benefits require the use of EBT cards.

So far, seven farmers’ markets in Baltimore City and Baltimore County are participating, with continued efforts at expansion. Maryland Hunger Solutions worked with them to ensure acquisition and proper use of EBT machines. And through Eat Fresh Maryland -- an initiative of the Crossroads Community Food Network, and of which Maryland Hunger Solutions is a key collaborator -- Baltimore-area farmers’ markets are able to share best-practices and innovations with farmers’ markets across the state that accept EBT, WIC Fruit & Vegetable Check Program, and other federal nutrition benefits.

Maryland Hunger Solutions also put in place incentives for nutrition program recipients to use farmers’ markets by launching the Baltimore Bucks project in 2010, with support from local foundations and Wholesome Wave. Through Baltimore Bucks, customers with EBT cards can double their FSP dollars up to $10 each week. In addition, seven of the farmers’ markets have Baltimore Bucks incentives for customers shopping with their WIC Fruit and Vegetable Checks (FVC) at the market, enabling them to double their WIC dollars.

The results so far have been impressive. Sales of fresh, local food to low-income Marylanders totaled $150,000 as of the end of 2012 and farmers received $291,000 through EBT and incentives.

“WIC is a beautiful thing because it allows us to come to different farmers’ markets and get fresh fruits and vegetables. ... there’s an incentive so you can double [your WIC voucher] with the farmers market. It’s actually more money for your bucks.”

— CASSANDRA KING, WIC RECIPIENT
The Goal: A State Without Hunger

Maryland Hunger Solutions’ first five years of work, despite coming with the worst economic calamity in 80 years, have laid the groundwork for a state in which hunger and food insecurity become relics of the past. Of course, there is much work still to be done, but Maryland has moved forward considerably in implementing the policies, funding and practices to achieve this singular goal.

What’s next is to take this progress and, as the economy improves, turn it into a more seamless, robust system of support for individuals and families at risk of hunger, while continuing to increase their access to affordable, healthy, nutritious food. Continued education and outreach are essential, as is advocacy and collaboration. Ultimately, Maryland Hunger Solutions seeks to build a state in which low-income individuals and families automatically receive the benefits to which they are entitled with a minimum of red tape, with cross-program coordination, at a level that covers their food and nutritional needs, and with a maximum efficiency in service delivery.

Over the long run, it also will be essential to tackle the underlying causes of poverty because, at its core, hunger largely stems from inadequate income and wealth.

This work will continue to encompass the public, private and non-profit sectors, as well as community, faith, health, educational and other allies. Our goal can only be achieved with the active support of every stakeholder.

We believe the moral urgency of ending hunger and the practical benefits for all of our society and economy make this the cause of our lifetime.

“Maryland Hunger Solutions has been a terrific partner in the fight to provide nutritious meals to needy children across our state. I led the effort with them to add Maryland to the Afterschool Supper Program, ensuring that thousands of disadvantaged Maryland children have access to healthy meals. I congratulate Maryland Hunger Solutions on their five-year anniversary, and look forward to working with them in the future.”

— REPRESENTATIVE DONNA EDWARDS, D-MD4
Funders

Maryland Hunger Solutions gratefully acknowledges the following funders whose generous support during the first five years of the project has made our work possible.

- AARP Foundation
- AARP Maryland
- Abell Foundation
- Anonymous Donors
- Baltimore Community Foundation
- Betty Lee and Dudley P. Digges Memorial Fund
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Community Foundation for Prince George's County
- Community Foundation for the National Capital Region
- Consumer Health Foundation
- Crossroads Community Food Network
- Fund for Change
- HEAL Convergence Partnership
- David and Barbara B. Hirschhorn Foundation
- Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic States
- Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund
- MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
- Moriah Fund
- Morningstar Foundation
- Share Our Strength
- Leonard and Helen R. Stulman Foundation
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- United Way of Central Maryland
- United Way of the National Capital Area
- Walmart Foundation
- Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
- Wholesome Wave
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Ending hunger and promoting well-being

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Maryland Hunger Solutions is an initiative of the Food Research and Action Center