



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 218

February 6, 2019

Maryland Hunger Solutions, a statewide nonprofit working to end hunger in Maryland, supports Senate Bill 218, “Summer SNAP for Children,” which is modeled after the successful Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children program, and would provide supplemental SNAP benefits in the amount of \$30 per child each summer month and \$10 per child during the winter school break.

Although Maryland is the wealthiest state in the country, this prosperity is not shared equally by all Marylanders. Nearly 20 percent of Maryland households with children struggle with food insecurity, meaning they do not have reliable access to enough food to provide healthy meals for their family.

As a longtime leader in the fight to end childhood hunger in the state, we are encouraged by the progress that the state legislature has made. However, we also know that there is much to be done and that these are times of great uncertainty for many families. Recent events have brought us closer than ever to witnessing the impact that the loss of federal nutrition programs, such as SNAP, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, and school meal programs would have on the lives of hundreds of thousands of Marylanders who rely on these programs to help make ends meet and put food on the table. Although we were fortunate enough to avert that potential crisis, many families are still forced to deal with the shadow of those effects during each and every school break, when their children lose access to the school meals that they rely on while they are in school.

During the 2017–2018 school year, over 185,000 students across the state were directly certified to receive free school meals through SNAP. It is these students who are most at risk of feeling the negative health effects of inadequate nutrition during school breaks, when their families may struggle to fill the gaps left by the absence of school meals. Although the federal summer meals program was designed to address this need, only around 22 percent of low-income children in Maryland accessed this resource last summer. Barriers such as stigma, fear, and lack of reliable transportation prevent many families from participating in summer meals.

Rural counties are particularly impacted by these barriers, with districts such as Allegany, Cecil, Charles, and Queen Anne's only reaching 7 percent of their low-income students over the summer, and Calvert reaching only 3 percent. By utilizing the existing structure of the Food Supplement Program, Summer SNAP for Children will allow for the children most in need to access summer meals more efficiently and effectively.

We know that SNAP investments yield high returns, as do investments in the healthy development of our children. By passing the Summer SNAP for Children Act, Maryland will benefit from a boost in the local economy — every \$5 in SNAP generates \$9 in economic activity — as well as a boost in the healthy development for our children. As demonstrated by reports on the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children program that Summer SNAP for Children was modeled after, by providing additional funding to families during the summer months, low-income children were shown to have improved diets as well increased food security. In light of this evidence, we urge you to support this bill and ensure our children have reliable access to healthy food year-round so that they can return to school healthy, nourished, and ready to learn.