



## **Maryland Hunger Solutions**

*Ending hunger and promoting well-being*

**Testimony in Opposition to HB957**  
**House Appropriations Committee**  
**Food Stamp Program-Time Limit Waiver Prohibition**  
**March 12, 2019**

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Under HB957, an estimated 30,000 Marylanders would face new time limits on their participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as the Food Supplement Program in Maryland. HB957 would force every jurisdiction in the state to limit certain SNAP recipients to only receiving food stamps for three months in a three-year period. If enacted, this law would mean additional hunger and poverty for our state.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, otherwise known as welfare reform, imposed time limits on Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) — individuals between the ages of 18–49, who do not live with disabilities and do not have dependents under the age of 18 in their household — who receive SNAP benefits. Similar legislation has been proposed in Maryland over the last three sessions; none has been approved.

Under the 1996 welfare reform legislation, waivers on time limits for SNAP benefits have been permitted in areas with high unemployment and areas where there simply aren't enough jobs. These waivers have been utilized by state governments across the country, and have proven a vital protection for those who struggle with the combined challenges of hunger, unemployment and underemployment. As the Great Recession receded, the number of waivers has decreased, and Maryland, like many other states, no longer has a statewide waiver.

Yet, even as the economy has improved, we know that it has not improved for everyone, nor has it improved in every jurisdiction. The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) examined all of the available economic data, including unemployment and labor surplus area statistics, and applied for waivers for those parts of the state deemed eligible under the rules — areas with high unemployment and jurisdictions where there simply are not enough jobs for those who need them. Those waivers were approved by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Under HB957, 11 jurisdictions would be subject to the time limits, and thousands of Marylanders would face the possibility of losing their SNAP benefits, regardless of how hard they are working or looking for work. Maryland Hunger Solutions is working with the DHS and other local social service organizations to conduct appropriate outreach to those communities which are impacted by the current time limits, including Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Calvert County, Carroll County, Charles County, Howard County, Frederick County, Montgomery County, Prince George's

County, St. Mary's County, and Washington County. This includes conducting intensive grassroots outreach to direct service providers serving the homeless, those with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, and SNAP participants. We've also done extensive outreach to other anti-hunger and anti-poverty advocates, local elected officials, and state human resources and job training offices. We are hopeful that the number of people who may be impacted will be far fewer as a result of these significant outreach and education efforts.

If enacted, the remaining jurisdictions in the state, including Baltimore City, the Eastern Shore, and Western Maryland would also face the time limits.

Let us be clear — HB957 does not provide additional resources for the state to assist with outreach, education, or connections to employment and training. It does nothing to address the low wages that these recipients face. It simply says that the state of Maryland may not utilize the waivers available under federal law and would force every Marylander in every jurisdiction to face this harsh policy, irrespective of the level of unemployment or poverty. In short, HB957 would severely limit the state's authority and hamper the Governor's ability to make appropriate determinations that safeguard the economic and nutritional well-being of our poorest residents.

The appropriate use of waivers should be combined with the use of legitimate exemptions and robust employment and training programs to move people from assistance to self-sufficiency.

**Therefore, we respectfully request an UNFAVORABLE report for HB957.**

Thank you.