

Food Insecurity in 2022 – Legislative and Policy Priorities for Maryland

While food insecurity rates have nearly doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic, the underlying inequities that cause too many Marylanders to struggle to keep food on that table have long existed in our food systems. As Maryland works to move forward through this pandemic and beyond, we know that addressing food insecurity and its root causes needs to be at the forefront of our recovery efforts.

During the 2022 Maryland Legislative Session, we will continue to support and advance critical policy changes that help to ensure all Marylanders have access to the affordable and nutritious foods of their choice.

We look forward to working with our partners, fellow advocates, and legislative champions to make sure that food security for all Marylanders is a key priority for the state in 2022 through the following efforts:

Increasing SNAP benefits for Older Adults

Recent changes on the federal level have increased the minimum SNAP benefit level across the country from \$15 per month to \$20 per month. While this is great news, we know that \$20 is still far from enough to provide adequate nutrition for the entire month. Maryland currently provides additional state funds to supplement SNAP benefits for older adults to ensure that no Marylander over the age of 62 receives less than \$30 of benefits per month. With the change in the federal minimum, examining the possibility of increasing the state minimum to \$45 per month and lower the age of eligibility for the supplement to 60 in order to provide a more livable benefit level for one of our most vulnerable populations.

To learn more or to support legislation around SNAP for older adults, please email JD Robinson at jdrobinson@mdhungersolutions.org

Ensuring Healthy School Meals for All Maryland

During the pandemic, federal waivers allowed all children across the nation to access school meals at no cost. These waivers are currently set to end in 2022, however, as we work toward recovery from this crisis and beyond, we believe that we cannot go back to a tiered payment systems that allows too many children to fall through the cracks. That is why we support efforts to make this change permanent and move Maryland towards a future where ALL students receive a breakfast and lunch at no cost during the school day – supporting the academic success and long-term health outcomes of all Maryland children.

To learn more about the Healthy School Meals for All Maryland campaign, please email Julia Gross at jgross@mdhungersolutions.org

Additional Legislative Efforts

HB 147/SB 121: Maryland Farms and Families Fund

This legislation aims to invest in the following three programs to enhance resiliency and reduce food insecurity:

- Maryland Market Money – This program matches SNAP, WIC, and P-EBT benefits used at Maryland farmers markets. It currently receives \$100,000 from the state annually. This legislation would increase funding to \$300,000 annually.
- Maryland Food and Agricultural Resilience Mechanism (MD FARM) – the creation of this program would ensure that locally sourced produce, products, and services are utilized to allow food assistance organizations to: purchase surplus product, cover costs of distribution and processing, arrange contract growing, or assemble and create food boxes.
- Farm to School Grant Pilot – this pilot aims to allow Maryland school districts to apply for grants of an additional 20 cents for every meal served that includes a Maryland food component.

Campus Hunger and SNAP for College Students:

Federal waivers have allowed college students increased access to SNAP benefits by removing longstanding barriers to eligibility during the pandemic. As these waivers come to an end, there is an effort to dedicate state funding to ensuring the students who benefited from this change do not lose access to the nutrition resources they need to thrive.

In addition, we expect that there will be other important legislative efforts which address food insecurity. These efforts may include providing additional funding to emergency food providers, providing additional funding to eligible low-income residents, and connecting food producers and providers to specific markets and populations. The Maryland Food Resilience Council will conduct a weekly public meeting which will examine food related legislation during the 2022 Legislative Session. Contact Michael J. Wilson at mjwilson@mdhungersolutions.org

Here's to a successful #MDGA2022 !



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being