

# Maryland Hunger Solutions

10 Years of Addressing Hunger,  
Improving Lives

2018



# Maryland Hunger Solutions: 10 Years of Addressing Hunger, Improving Lives

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# Executive Summary

Maryland is the wealthiest state in the nation, but not all Marylanders share in the prosperity. Across the state, a staggering 1 in 10 households struggles against hunger. Children go to school on empty stomachs because their families cannot afford healthy food for dinner, breakfast, or both. Parents, grandparents, and other caregivers struggle as they skip meals so children get enough to eat. Many of these households include adults who work at least one job, but the high cost of living, combined with inadequate wages, make it impossible for them to earn enough money to put nutritious meals on the table, pay bills, and afford transportation. Seniors and people with disabilities who are on fixed incomes are often forced to choose between food and medicine.

In 2007, there was no statewide anti-hunger organization with the knowledge and resources to address hunger systematically in Maryland. That year, the leading national anti-hunger advocacy group, the Food Research & Action Center, formed Maryland Hunger Solutions to fill that gap. Since then, Maryland Hunger Solutions has been working steadily to promote and advocate for long-term and sustainable solutions to eliminate hunger for all of Maryland's residents.

Over the past decade, a core strategy of Maryland Hunger Solutions has been to increase and expand participation in the federal nutrition programs. One priority has been the Food Supplement Program (Maryland's food stamp program), which serves as the state's first line of defense against hunger. Another priority has been promoting maternal and early childhood nutrition programs, school meals programs, and out-of-school time programs (such as after-school and summer meals) that ensure children of all ages get the nutrition they need to be healthy and able to learn.

Maryland Hunger Solutions has connected a host of anti-hunger partners — local, state, and national anti-hunger advocates; government agencies at all levels; medical professionals; service providers and other nonprofits; and food policy councils — to make progress toward ending hunger in Maryland. One area of focus has been school breakfast. Since 2009, Maryland Hunger Solutions has released an annual school breakfast scorecard to show how well each Maryland public school sys-

"Maryland Hunger Solutions is committed to ending hunger in Maryland, and they have been a valuable resource as we craft policies to combat this critical issue. I look forward to working with them for years to come to help families in our community and across the country."

— Senator Chris Van Hollen



tem is doing in reaching all students with school breakfast. Between school year 2006–2007 and school year 2015–2016, school breakfast participation grew from less than 14 percent to nearly 29 percent of eligible low-income children. One of the reasons for this increase is that Maryland Hunger Solutions advocated successfully for systemic changes, such as the passage of the Hunger-Free Schools Act of 2015, which increased access to community eligibility, allowing Maryland’s high-poverty schools to offer all students free school meals, thus creating hunger-free schools.

For 10 years and counting, Maryland Hunger Solutions has brought positive changes to hundreds of thousands of Maryland residents:

- more babies get a healthier start in life;
- more children have access to free school meals, without stigma;

- more children play, learn, and access healthy food in safe environments after school and during the summer months; and
- more seniors thrive because of increased Food Supplement Program benefits.

Maryland Hunger Solutions has achieved so much in its first decade, but there is more work to be done. There are still untold numbers of children, seniors, people living with disabilities, veterans, and low-wage earners who do not get the nutrition they need to be productive on a daily basis. This can have exponential negative effects on the individual and community levels and in the short and long runs. But this can change. Everyone is a stakeholder in the fight against hunger, and together, we can create a hunger-free Maryland.

Contact Maryland Hunger Solutions for information on how to donate, sponsor events, receive updates, and more.



# Introduction

**Maryland was the nation’s wealthiest state in 2007**, when measured by per capita income, but the state still countenanced far too much poverty and hunger. That year, the Food Research & Action Center established Maryland Hunger Solutions to fight hunger and improve the nutrition, health, and well-being of Maryland’s residents who did not enjoy the same prosperity as those who pushed Maryland to the top-ranked income spot.

Ten years later, Maryland is still America’s richest state, and Maryland Hunger Solutions continues to ensure the 1 in 10 households in the state that struggles against hunger has access to the necessary nutrition for a healthy, productive life. These are households that include children, adults, seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, and the working poor.

To overcome barriers and create self-sustaining connections between Maryland residents and nutritious foods, Maryland Hunger Solutions:

- educates the public and key stakeholders about the stark reality of hunger’s existence in Maryland and available solutions;
- advocates for better public policies to end hunger, reduce poverty, and promote nutrition; and
- promotes maximum participation in all federal nutrition programs by removing barriers to participation, working closely with social service agencies, and performing outreach.

Through education, advocacy, outreach, collaboration, and sharing best practices, Maryland Hunger Solutions has improved the lives of Maryland residents since 2007. The largest gains have been made in three areas: the Food Supplement Program (the food stamp program in Maryland), senior hunger, and the Child Nutrition Programs.



## **Food Supplement Program**

The efforts of Maryland Hunger Solutions have led to substantial increases in participation in the Food Supplement Program, which helps low-income working households and seniors access the nutrition they need. Specifically, Maryland Hunger Solutions:

- analyzes Food Supplement Program policy and advocates for changes that improve program access and increase benefits;
- provides tailored outreach materials to groups in need of assistance;
- trains partners to conduct outreach and enroll clients; and
- assists clients with the application and recertification processes.

## **Senior Hunger**

In 2012, Maryland Hunger Solutions designated February to be Senior Hunger Action Month, which has resulted in connecting more of Maryland's senior population with the Food Supplement Program, not only during February, but year-round. Since that time, Maryland Hunger Solutions has:

- helped to enact a supplemental Food Supplement Program benefit for participants who are 62 and over to ensure that they receive at least \$30 a month;
- trained staff at Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland to help more than 1,500 clients with Food Supplement Program applications; and
- collaborated with AARP Maryland to educate over 4,000 seniors about the Food Supplement Program's benefits at a tele-town hall.

"I respect the work that Maryland Hunger Solutions is doing to address hunger and poverty. I also respect the way that they are doing it — with a focus on economic and social justice that lifts people up and doesn't put them down."

— Adar Ayira,  
Associated Black Charities

## **Child Nutrition Programs**

The School Breakfast Program, School Lunch Program, Afterschool Meals Program, Summer Food Service Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) connect low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children to healthy meals, snacks, and programming. To support the Child Nutrition Programs, Maryland Hunger Solutions provides technical assistance; helps develop and implement strategies for direct outreach; and leads informational sessions about the Child Nutrition Programs, focusing on eligibility, participation, and best practices.

Over the last decade, Maryland Hunger Solutions has

Nearly 10 percent of Marylanders live below the poverty line; 1 in 10 Maryland households faces a constant struggle against hunger; and nearly 21 percent of Maryland's households with children cannot obtain enough food to reliably provide healthy meals for the entire family. Households are forced to decide whether to pay for housing, utility bills, transportation, medicine, or food. These tough choices often lead adults and children to skip or eat less nutritious meals to save money, but with serious consequences: low birth weight, poor academic achievement, long-term economic costs, obesity, dental problems, and health issues.



- led advocacy efforts to increase school districts' and schools' adoption of the Community Eligibility Provision, which allows high-poverty schools to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students. Through coalition building and education efforts targeting the legislature, the Hunger-Free Schools Act of 2015 passed unanimously and was signed into law by the governor. As a result of this law, the number of Hunger-Free Schools increased from just 23 in the 2014–2015 school year to 227 in the 2015–2016 school year. In particular, Baltimore City Public Schools saw an increase of 10,000 more lunches consumed daily in 2015 after the entire school district enrolled in community eligibility.
- started the “Hear the Crunch” campaign to raise awareness about access to school breakfast for low-income children. More than 1 million Marylanders now “take a bite” out of hunger every spring. Students in every school district, legislators, and partners around the state participate in the campaign.
- advocated successfully for Maryland's WIC agency to apply for — and receive — a federal WIC recertification waiver, which allows participants to recertify annually, instead of every six months.
- led the effort that has increased by one-half the participation ratio in school breakfast by low-income children, compared to those who participate in school lunch.
- partnered with the Maryland Farmers Market Association and the Maryland State Department of Education in 2015 to pilot summer meals at farmers markets.
- chaired the Afterschool Meals Work Group for the Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger, which resulted in increased program participation, the sharing of best practices to target areas with afterschool meal service gaps, and a reduction in barriers to access to afterschool meals.

# Advancing the Mission of Maryland Hunger Solutions

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

Maryland Hunger Solutions' strategy to ending hunger is to expand participation in, and remove barriers to, the federal nutrition programs and other key anti-poverty supports. Through the work of Maryland Hunger Solutions, the federal nutrition programs — especially the Food Supplement Program (Maryland's food stamp program) and the Child Nutrition Programs — have lifted tens of thousands more Marylanders out of poverty and improved their health and overall nutrition.

## ***Eliminating Hunger and Promoting Well-being Through Partnerships***

Maryland Hunger Solutions collaborates with federal, state, and local authorities, as well as nonprofit allies, labor, business, and others, to raise awareness of nutrition programs, eliminate barriers to participation, and combat stigma. The organization works with the governor's office, the Maryland Department of Human Services, the Maryland State Department of Education, school districts around the state, counties and cities, and nonprofit organizations, including advocacy groups, to implement strategies for extending the reach of the federal nutrition programs.

Through these critical partnerships, Maryland Hunger Solutions leverages its capacity and identifies the most effective ways to end hunger in a culturally and economically diverse state with multiple population densities, including urban, suburban, and rural. Maryland Hunger Solutions works with diverse communities

across the state, including the Eastern Shore, the mountains in the west, the central and northern counties in between, Baltimore City, and the suburbs of the DC metropolitan area.

## ***Advocating for Policies to Improve Anti-Hunger Programs***

Maryland Hunger Solutions knows that poverty is the primary cause of food insecurity, and that poverty is a complex issue. Yet, solutions do exist. A healthy economy with opportunities for all Marylanders and wages that sustain workers and their families are good places to start. It is also critical that there is a strong safety net in place that supports low- and moderate-income people and those experiencing short-term economic distress.

Maryland Hunger Solutions educates policy makers at the local, state, and federal levels about the reality of food insecurity in their communities and around the state. To build alliances with administrators and legislators, Maryland Hunger Solutions hosts annual legislative brainstorming sessions to develop advocacy plans that reflect the needs of all Marylanders who are struggling with hunger.



## **Strategic Targeting to Create Food Security**

Maryland Hunger Solutions shares its expertise at the local level. By analyzing data from the Food Research & Action Center and state and federal agencies, and by sharing best practices from across the state and around the country, Maryland Hunger Solutions targets its work and connects with partners to close gaps in services and address local needs.

Maryland Hunger Solutions works with local food policy councils across the state to ensure that anti-hunger policies and programs are an integral part of their work. These groups have included the Baltimore City Food Policy Action Committee, Port Towns Community Health Initiative (which evolved into the Prince George's County Food Equity Council), the Montgomery County Food Policy Council, Howard County Food Policy Task Force, and the Baltimore County Food Policy Task Force. Maryland Hunger Solutions also has participated in the Maryland Food Charter, providing leadership to ensure that food-insecure Marylanders have the opportunity to join farmers, producers, retailers and other consumers in analyzing and coordinating work on the entire food system.

## **Tapping Best Practices for Success**

There is tremendous value to having a state, regional, and national network of partners. Maryland Hunger Solutions has access to hundreds of allies and resources from across the country because of the Food Research & Action Center's broad network. Maryland Hunger Solutions has benefitted from these resources by learning about successes and lessons from around the nation, and has shared these stories and best

"Over the last 10 years, I have seen dramatic increases in the number of residents who need our services. Partners, such as Maryland Hunger Solutions, who help amplify the need for programs and policy solutions to address hunger, are critical! We look forward to your continued leadership and our continued partnership to end food insecurity in Maryland."

—Brenda DiCarlo, Director, Southern Maryland Food Bank



practices with Maryland jurisdictions. These best practices include promoting the Community Eligibility Provision, reaching out to seniors to increase participation in the Food Supplement Program and addressing the program's arbitrary time limits, which severely limit access to food stamps by able-bodied adults without dependents.

Maryland Hunger Solutions applies what it learns to improve state policies and lead legislative efforts to end hunger and increase access to better nutrition for Maryland's most vulner-

# How Ronald Bailey Became “Mr. 62”

In 2016, Maryland Hunger Solutions championed legislation to increase the minimum monthly benefit of \$15 for the Food Supplement Program. One of the key ways the organization did this was by coordinating testimony to describe the importance of improving the minimum benefit to real peoples’ lives. One of the witnesses was Ronald Bailey. He had been receiving the minimum benefit and he spoke truth to power when he testified before the Maryland House Appropriations Committee. Bailey shared that as a senior, the mere \$15 federal minimum was not enough to provide him with adequate nutrition, and that he often had to choose between medication and food. After hearing all of the testimonies, the committee was set to vote that seniors age 65 and older would not receive less than \$30 in monthly benefits. “Mr. Chairman,” Mr. Bailey said as he raised his hand for acknowledgment. “That won’t help me. I’m only 62.” The Chairman replied, “Well then, we shall change the bill so that any senior age 62 and older will now be eligible to receive a minimum benefit of \$30 a month in Food Supplement Program benefits!”



able residents. For example, Maryland Hunger Solutions championed legislation in 2016 that led to an increase in the minimum monthly benefit from \$15 to \$30 for seniors participating in the Food Supplement Program<sup>1</sup>. Maryland Hunger Solutions also advocated for the pas-

sage of the Equal Access to Food Act in 2017, which removes barriers to participation in the Food Supplement Program for those who were formerly incarcerated for low-level drug offenses.

<sup>1</sup> The minimum monthly benefit decreased from \$16 to \$15 in 2017.

“Maryland Hunger Solutions has made a real difference in the lives of students, seniors and low-income residents. Their hard work and their thoughtful approach has made Maryland a better place for thousands of our neighbors.”

— Maryland State Senator  
Richard Madaleno



# Maryland Hunger Solutions:

## Selected Highlights From 10 Years of Results, Leadership, and Partnership

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### 2017

Maryland Hunger Solutions joined with the Job Opportunities Task Force and Out for Justice to successfully advocate for the passage of state legislation that helped eliminate barriers to the Food Supplement Program (Maryland's food stamp program) for eligible formerly incarcerated Maryland residents, thereby addressing hunger, poverty, and recidivism.

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### 2016

Maryland Hunger Solutions successfully advocated for the state to provide a supplemental benefit for seniors 62 and older who participate in the Food Supplement Program, but only receive the minimum benefit. Instead of receiving the federal minimum of \$15 a month, these Maryland seniors now receive \$30.<sup>1</sup>

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### 2015

Maryland Hunger Solutions championed the Hunger-Free Schools Act, allowing Maryland schools and school districts to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision without fear of losing state funding. Community eligibility allows high-poverty schools to offer both breakfast and lunch to all students at no charge. The number of Maryland schools participating in community eligibility and offering meals free to all children soared from 23 to 277 within one year of the law's passage.

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### 2014

Maryland Hunger Solutions successfully led efforts with advocacy partners to secure an additional \$1.8 million in funding in the governor's budget for Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA), a state-funded program that allows high-poverty schools to serve free breakfast in the classroom to all students.

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### 2013

Maryland Hunger Solutions partnered with AARP and the Maryland Department of Human Resources to conduct tele-town hall meetings with thousands of seniors across Maryland, and provide them with information about the Food Supplement Program, offer application assistance, and share resources.

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### 2012

Maryland Hunger Solutions successfully pushed for the Maryland Department of Human Resources to apply for federal Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) assistance for Maryland residents affected by Hurricane Sandy. A federal declaration was granted, and affected Eastern Shore residents were able to receive benefits.

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### 2011

Maryland Hunger Solutions monitored Maryland Department of Social Services offices and statewide clinics administering the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). By interviewing clients, gathering information on barriers to program participation, and seeking opportunities for policy improvements, Maryland Hunger Solutions advocated successfully to allow Maryland WIC participants to recertify for benefits annually, instead of every six months.

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### 2010

Maryland Hunger Solutions worked with the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)/Farmers Market Advisory Committee to successfully pilot an effort for farmers markets in the Baltimore area to accept EBT, enabling thousands of Marylanders to use their Food Supplement Program benefits at farmers markets. The pilot also launched "Baltimore Bucks," which provides clients of this program matching dollars to use at participating Baltimore-area farmers markets.

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### 2009

Maryland Hunger Solutions issued its first school breakfast report, which featured district data measuring school breakfast participation and recommended best practices to reduce barriers and increase school breakfast participation across the state.

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### 2008

Maryland Hunger Solutions became a state outreach partner with the Maryland Department of Human Resources to train local partners, share program information, and assist the public in applying for the Food Supplement Program.

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### 2007

The Food Research & Action Center created Maryland Hunger Solutions, a separately staffed and funded initiative to end hunger and improve the nutrition, health, and well-being of children and families in Maryland.

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<sup>1</sup> The minimum monthly benefit decreased from \$16 to \$15 in 2017.



“For the last 10 years, Maryland Hunger Solutions has worked to raise the profile of hunger and poverty in Maryland. Their advocacy and expertise have made them a go-to resource as I fight for the citizens of the Second District and throughout Maryland who simply don’t have enough to eat.”

— Congressman CA “Dutch” Ruppersberger

## Call to Action: Join the Fight Against Hunger

**Are you ready to join the movement?**

**Here are tangible and meaningful ways you can become involved:**

- 1. VOTE:** Electing leadership that is aware of and willing to help end food insecurity is the first defense against hunger. Federal, state, and local policies that strengthen the safety net and boost the economy are critical to ensuring a healthy, thriving Maryland.
- 2. CONTRIBUTE:** Maryland Hunger Solutions’ parent and fiscal agent, the Food Research & Action Center, is a non-profit 501(c)(3). Donations for Maryland Hunger Solutions, which are tax-deductible, go a long way to helping accomplish the organization’s mission to end hunger.
- 3. PARTNER OR VOLUNTEER:** Help Maryland Hunger Solutions extend its reach even further. Does your organization work with low-income people, or would you like to help Maryland Hunger Solutions personally? Please contact Maryland Hunger Solutions for more information.
- 4. SIGN UP:** Do you receive action alerts and emails from Maryland Hunger Solutions? If not, sign up today so that you can stay up-to-date on threats to food security, policy changes, ways to improve the reach and progress of anti-hunger programs, and opportunities to express your concerns to public officials.
- 5. EXPRESS YOURSELF:** Let everyone know that you support ending hunger in Maryland by talking about it in person and online, writing letters to the editor, and through other communication channels. Education and awareness are key to creating shifts in public perception.

Everyone is a stakeholder in the fight against hunger. Of Maryland’s nearly 2 million households, more than 1 in 10 is food insecure, so there is much work to be done.

Contact Maryland Hunger Solutions for more information on how to be part of Maryland’s anti-hunger efforts.

## Ten-Year Change in Key Nutrition Program Indicators in Maryland, 2007-2017

	Year		10-Year Change	
	2007	2017	Number	Percent
<b>Food Supplement Program (Fiscal Year Averages)<sup>1</sup></b>				
Total Participants	317,827	684,282	366,455	115%
Total Benefits	\$29,770,344	\$82,260,352	\$52,490,008	176%
<b>School Breakfast Program (School Years 2006-2007 and 2016-2017)<sup>2</sup></b>				
Free and Reduced-Price (F/RP) Average Daily Participation (ADP)	94,962	199,501	104,539	110%
Ratio to F/RP School Lunch ADP	43.0	63	20	46.5%
National Rank	26	9	17	-

Source: Data were provided by the Maryland State Department of Education. For more information, please contact Maryland Hunger Solutions.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2015). Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participation data. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/pd/SNAPZip69 throughCurrent.zip>. Accessed on November 30, 2017.



## Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) Participation, School Year 2006–2007 to School Year 2015–2016

School Year	Student Enrollment in MMFA
2006–2007	79,846
2007–2008	76,830
2008–2009	80,375
2009–2010	81,408
2010–2011	91,139
2011–2012	100,965
2012–2013	131,502
2013–2014	200,491
2014–2015	231,612
2015–2016	244,908

Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) is a best practice model for offering breakfast in the classroom at no charge to all children in schools where at least 40 percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Maryland Hunger Solutions spearheaded efforts to increase funding to MMFA. In collaboration with partners from the Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger, successful advocacy by Maryland Hunger Solutions led to an increase in the governor's budget for MMFA, adding an additional \$1.8 million dollars to the budget in fiscal years 2013 and 2014. Dramatic increases in participation are evidenced in the chart on this page.

Source: Data were provided by the Maryland State Department of Education. For more information, please contact Maryland Hunger Solutions.

"Maryland Hunger Solutions has been a great champion for kids in Washington County and across the state. I appreciate their leadership and partnership on getting legislation passed that enables us to feed thousands more kids each day! We look forward to working with you in the years to come. Congratulations and thank you for helping us tell our story."

— Jeffrey Proulx, former Food and Nutrition Services Director for Washington County (Washington County, under the leadership of Jeffrey Proulx, was the first Local Education Agency to implement the Community Eligibility Provision in multiple schools.)





Celebrating



10 Years

**Maryland Hunger Solutions**

*Ending hunger and promoting well-being*

[www.Mdhungersolutions.org](http://www.Mdhungersolutions.org)



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