

**More Struggling Marylanders to Get a Lifeline from "New" Program
that Provides Individuals with Monthly Benefits to Purchase Food
Electronic Card Allows Individuals to Buy Nutritious Food at Local Stores**

Baltimore – October 2, 2008 – Marylanders struggling against hunger will benefit from the state's Food Supplement Program, which was unveiled this week. The Food Supplement Program provides struggling low-income households with monthly benefits that they can use to purchase food at their local grocery stores.

As an added bonus, the program will help spur the economy into action as every Food Supplement Program dollar spent generates nearly double that in the local economy.

For many, the program might have a familiar ring to it. That's because the Food Supplement Program is Maryland's new name for a successful and improved federal program – the Food Stamp Program.

"Marylanders are struggling with increasing food costs, energy costs and an uncertain economy. The Food Supplement Program will help households across the state by giving them assistance with purchasing food," said Kimberley Chin, director of Maryland Hunger Solutions.

In June 2008, 366,584 Marylanders participated in the program. According to the latest official U.S. Department of Agriculture data, the program reached only 55 percent of eligible Marylanders in 2005. Participation is on the rise, however, with an increase of 43.6 percent over past five years.

"With the new name, there are new opportunities for increased outreach. This is a chance for people to become reacquainted with the program and to see if they are eligible to receive the benefits," said Chin.

The name is not the only change to take effect. Other program improvements include increasing the minimum benefit and standard deduction, eliminating the cap on the dependent care deduction and excluding education and retirement accounts from countable resources.

"As food and energy costs continue to rise and the economy weakens, the Food Supplement Program is an essential part of any plan to improve the economy and help struggling families," Chin continued. "It is vital that we use this opportunity to reintroduce the program to the tens of thousands that would benefit from it."

For Food Supplement Program participation by county, go to www.mdhungersolutions.org/facts_stats.shtm

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Maryland Hunger Solutions is an initiative of the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) that works to reduce poverty and end hunger in Maryland. Its main strategy is to get tens of thousands more Marylanders, especially children, enrolled in available federal food programs.