



Testimony in Support of HB 84
Maryland Farms and Families Fund
House Appropriations Committee
January 29, 2019

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in Maryland as the Food Supplement Program (FSP), formerly food stamps, is a critical safety net program for low-income individuals and families. Statewide, over 630,000 residents, more than half of whom are children, disabled or elderly, rely on FSP. It is a proven effective and efficient strategy for reducing food insecurity — the lack of reliable access to food — a condition that impacts 1 in 10 Marylanders, representing 232,000 households.ⁱ Through our work we have met hundreds of these families.

They live in every county of our state, in both rural and urban areas. They are veterans, they are of varying ethnic, racial and faith backgrounds; some have GEDs and some have Ph.Ds. Many of them, of those who are able to work, are employed at multiple jobs to make ends meet. Yet, there is still not enough money left over for food.

One of FSP's greatest strengths is its ability to respond to changing economic conditions and assist individuals when they fall on hard times. Yet, the inadequacy of benefits remains a continued barrier for many low-income Marylanders. The average FSP benefit in Maryland is \$127 a month, which averages out to roughly \$5 a day — an amount that is insufficient to afford nutritious food.ⁱⁱ Nutrition incentive programs like Maryland Market Money enhance the spending power of federal nutrition benefits, placing more healthy food within reach of low-income families.

Maryland Market Money provides a dollar-for-dollar match, currently up to \$5 for purchases, made using federal nutrition benefits including FSP, WIC, and Farmers Market Nutrition Program. The program is managed by the Maryland Farmers Market Association and supports the bottom line of local farmers and the health of low-income Marylanders by expanding access to high quality, nutritious food. Since 2013, Maryland Market Money has grown and expanded to operate in 21 farmers markets, providing added revenue for farmers and critical nutrition assistance to low-income communities. More than \$263,296 in federal nutrition benefits have been redeemed through this program, benefiting more than 13,000 households. The program has generated over \$1,148,150 for over 309 agricultural producers selling in Maryland farmers markets. It currently operates in six counties including Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, Prince George's, Talbot, and Baltimore City.

The Maryland Farms and Families Fund (HB 84) provides vital state funding to expand the Maryland Market Money program and ensures its sustainability over the next five years. If enacted, HB 84 would enable significant opportunities for program expansion

and capacity-building — particularly in many rural communities and areas with food deserts that have not been able to participate in the program to date. We strongly support HB 84 and its shared goal to support the economic interests of Maryland farmers, expanded access to high-quality nutritious food, and the health of low-income communities.

We request a favorable report on HB 84.

ⁱ Maryland Food Supplement Program, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. January 23 2017
http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_maryland.pdf

ⁱⁱ IBID