



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND**

Governor Larry Hogan
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1925

Dear Governor Hogan:

We are writing to urge you to support additional food security in federal or state stimulus or emergency relief legislation. At this writing, there have been 2,768 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Montgomery out of 14,193 cases in Maryland. Even though we have not reached the peak of the spread of the disease in Maryland, the resources of our food assistance providers are being stretched far beyond their normal capacity.

As families struggle with lost income, medical expenses and other challenges, our food providers have seen as much as a 75-500% increase in clients. The complexity of serving our vulnerable residents has likewise increased. Moreover, we anticipate that constituent needs will continue to grow while social distancing restrictions are in place and last well into an economic recovery.

Thus, we recommend the following food security measures be put into place:

- **Increasing SNAP Benefits:** A modest, 15 percent increase in SNAP benefits would equip families to utilize local grocery markets to provide meals; a tool that proved most effective during the Great Recession.
- **Direct payments in the form of Flexible Emergency Assistance Grants to states:** Most food banks are going to need direct funding for food purchases, added costs, and to account for an abrupt decline in retail donations. States are best equipped to identify this need and provide allocation where it will have the quickest and most effective impact.
- **Activation of Disaster-SNAP:** This pandemic is having and will have far reaching consequences, creating a situation as dire as a natural disaster. D-SNAP will allow for replacement rates of benefits, along with enhanced eligibility for individuals who may not typically qualify for the program.
- **Further Relaxation of SNAP and Federal Nutritional Program Guidelines:** Additional federal leniency and discretion in the administration of low-income nutrition programs is integral. For example, current SNAP program rules prohibit the purchase of hot meals from stores or restaurants. This is a barrier to families who, under normal circumstances, have limited access to sufficient nutrition.

Temporary Universal Deduction for Charitable Donations: Phase two stimulus legislation took an incremental step to encourage donations to nonprofits by allowing for a \$300 deduction in instances where a filer does not itemize tax filing documents. This should be uncapped for the foreseeable future; food assistance organizations will be relying on donors in the months to come, and all incentives are warranted to support our efforts.

PAGE 2
Governor Larry Hogan

- **USDA Supporting Emergency Meals:** Encourage the USDA to create a grant application that allows restaurants nationwide to get reimbursed at a predetermined amount per meal served. Meals must be reasonably healthy; incorporating fruits and vegetables, lean meat, grains and dairy (alcohol and soda not eligible). The grant program will encourage economic activity and connect residents to healthy, high quality and culturally appropriate meals during this public health emergency

We appreciate your help in enacting these measures.

Yours truly,



Councilmember Sidney Katz, District 3
Council President



Councilmember Tom Hucker, District 5
Council Vice President



At-Large Councilmember Will Jawando



At-Large Councilmember Gabe Albornoz



Councilmember Andrew Friedson, District 1



At-Large Councilmember Evan Glass



At-Large Councilmember Hans Reimer



Councilmember Nancy Navarro, District 4



Councilmember Craig Rice, District 2

cc: Montgomery County Delegation