



## COMMISSION ON AGING

February 16, 2022

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chair  
House Appropriations Committee  
House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street, Room 121  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Delegate McIntosh,

I am writing in support of HB456 on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging (COA). The Commission is authorized by the *Older Americans Act*, P.L. 116-131, and was established by Montgomery County in 1974 to advise County government on the needs, interests, and issues of older adult residents, and to advocate on their behalf at the local, state, and national levels.

HB456 would lower the minimum age (from 62 to 60) that a member of a household must be to be eligible for a State supplemental benefit under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The bill also increases the State supplemental benefit that households with an individual age 60 or older receive from \$30 per month to a total monthly benefit of \$45.

While SNAP recipients currently are receiving more generous allotments due to the federal public health emergency, authorization for the additional allotment is expected to expire shortly at which time SNAP benefits will revert to pre-pandemic levels. Thus, for example, a household of one that has been receiving \$250/month under the public health waiver will see its benefit precipitously decline to \$30/month.

The timing for this reduction could not come at a worse time. Consumer Price Index data for January 2022 indicate that prices rose 7.5 percent over the past year, the fastest pace in 40 years. Prices for food, housing, and electricity were among the leading factors driving the increase. The United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (USDA ERS) estimates that food prices will continue to rise in 2022.

SNAP benefits represent a critically important safety net for older adults. Among older adults in Montgomery County, 6.6 percent are estimated to live below the poverty level, and roughly 20-30,000 live below the self-sufficiency standard. Many are also aging in place and in isolation, with limited access to transportation and technology, limited English proficiency, physical and mental disabilities, and medical dietary restrictions—all factors that exacerbate food insecurity.

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**Department of Health and Human Services**

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Statewide, there are over 860,000 Marylanders on SNAP, a record number of participants. While the Commission believes that a great deal more must be done to eradicate food insecurity in our state, the modest improvements contained in this bill are one step in that direction. We urge you and your fellow committee members to give HB456 favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

*Barbara Selter*

Barbara Selter, Chair