

# JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 698:**  
**Food Supplement Employment and Training Program - Benefits and Funding**

TO: Hon. Maggie McIntosh, Chair, and Members of the House Appropriations  
Committee  
FROM: Christopher Dews, Policy Advocate  
DATE: February 27, 2020

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that advocates for better jobs, skills training, and wages for low-income workers and job seekers in Maryland. We support House Bill 698 as a means to increase investments in the Food Supplement Employment and Training Program and remove educational and employment barriers for low-wage workers.

The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides benefits for the purchase of food items to families and individuals who meet income and resource requirements. Program rules and regulations are issued by the federal government. Administrative costs are split equally between the State and federal government. SNAP offers funding to States to provide a package of employment and training services to SNAP participants through SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T). SNAP E&T helps SNAP participants gain skills, training, or work experience to increase their ability to obtain regular employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

In 2016, 10 states were selected to begin developing SNAP E&T programs, including Arizona, Arkansas, California, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, and Tennessee. The Maryland SNAP E&T program (formerly known as the Food Supplement Employment and Training Program or FSET) connects people who receive monthly food supplement benefits to free job-driven training programs in the State. These programs provide services including job readiness activities, support services, job placement, and job retention services. Some programs provide adult basic education, a variety of vocational training, and opportunities for participants to receive certificates or credentials. FSET workforce development services include case management services that are designed to identify and remove certain barriers to employment including childcare, transportation, criminal records, limited education, age, disability, domestic violence, housing issues, lack of employment history, or literacy. In federal fiscal 2018, DHS partnered with 15 entities to provide E&T services with a budget of \$5,005,026. DHS has since expanded the program, partnering with 21 third-party entities to provide E&T services with a budget of \$9,580,650 in federal fiscal 2019.

Millions of indigent Marylanders have been serviced by the FSET Program, and have received access to employment in various fields including healthcare, environmental remediation, information technology, solar panel installation, electrical engineering, carpentry and much more. It has been a boon to Maryland's indigent population and needs to continue. The issue is that for many Marylanders the federal funding is not available to give them access to these life-changing transitional services.

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House Bill 698 seeks to ensure that those who are not covered by Federal FSET funding have the opportunity to be covered by the State. Not only will this legislation give basic necessities to those who don't have them, it will also give access to employment opportunities so people can rise economically and sustain themselves. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.