



**Testimony of Louise Hayes
Supervising Attorney, Community Legal Services of Philadelphia
Regarding Pennsylvania's Heat and Eat Program
Coordinating SNAP and LIHEAP Benefits**

In Support of Maryland HB 101

Good afternoon, and thank you for allowing me to testify in support of HB 101, a proposal to bring the Heat and Eat program to Maryland. Since 1997, I have been a lawyer at Community Legal Services of Philadelphia, where I both represent low-income Philadelphians seeking benefits from our county assistance office, and engage in systemic advocacy with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services in Harrisburg. I am Community Legal Services' expert on the SNAP program.

Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services adopted the Heat and Eat policy administratively in 2010. This policy provides a LIHEAP benefit to households receiving SNAP that are not already receiving LIHEAP, thereby enabling those households to receive additional federally-funded SNAP benefits. I assume other witnesses have explained how this works generally. In 2014, after Congress tweaked the rules enabling states to adopt Heat and Eat, Pennsylvania readily modified its program to comply with the new rules. This decision was made under Governor Tom Corbett, who was a Republican. I believe Lourdes Padilla was then our Deputy Secretary for Income Maintenance, and oversaw the adoption of this policy, to her great credit.

The program has been uncontroversial, because it has increased the benefits of approximately 400,000 of the neediest Pennsylvania households by an average of \$60 - \$65 per month. This translates to roughly \$300 million in additional SNAP benefits annually for a \$6 - \$8 million annual LIHEAP investment. Those who benefit are disproportionately seniors and people with disabilities, because of SNAP program rules that allow those households to deduct all their housing and utility expenses, and not have that deduction capped. And Heat & Eat has also made administration of the SNAP program simpler, by reducing the amount of paperwork households must submit, and that caseworkers must process. I understand that adoption of Heat & Eat also reduced Pennsylvania's SNAP Quality Control errors, reducing the risk of federal penalties.

The way Heat & Eat works in Pennsylvania is that every September, DHS places \$21 in LIHEAP funds on the EBT card of most SNAP households, with some exceptions (including those who already receive LIHEAP, households who are homeless, and households living in certain institutions). DHS then codes the SNAP household as a LIHEAP recipient in its SNAP



system, whereby the household is given credit for \$594 in utility expenses monthly. This utility expense deduction increases the household's SNAP benefit if the household is not already receiving the maximum benefit or already receiving the maximum excess shelter deduction.

From Pennsylvania's perspective, the decision to adopt Heat and Eat was an easy one. Heat & Eat greatly benefits Pennsylvania's neediest seniors and people with disabilities, and it greatly simplifies program administration, at minimal cost. I heartily urge Maryland to adopt Heat & Eat.

I would be happy to answer any questions, now or in the future. I can be reached at LHayes@clsphila.org, or (215) 227-4734.