



Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network

MSCAN

AARP Maryland

*Alzheimer's
Association,
Maryland Chapters*

*Baltimore Jewish
Council*

Catholic Charities

*Central Maryland
Ecumenical Council*

Church of the Brethren

*Episcopal Diocese of
Maryland*

*Housing Opportunities
Commission of
Montgomery County*

*Jewish Community
Relations Council of
Greater Washington*

*Lutheran Office on
Public Policy in
Maryland*

*Maryland Association of
Area Agencies on Aging*

*Maryland Catholic
Conference*

*Mental Health
Association of Maryland*

Mid-Atlantic LifeSpan

*National Association of
Social Workers,
Maryland Chapter*

Presbytery of Baltimore

*The Coordinating
Center*

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**Testimony in Support of HB147
Maryland Farm and Families Fund, Maryland Food and Agriculture Resiliency
Mechanism Grant Program, and Maryland Farm-to-School Meal Grant Pilot Program –
Alternations and Establishment**

**House Environment and Transportation Committee
January 19, 2022**

The Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network (MSCAN) is a statewide coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, faith-based and mission-driven organizations that supports policies that meet the housing, health and quality of care needs of Maryland's low and moderate-income seniors.

MSCAN supports HB 147, which establishes long-term funding for the Maryland Farm and Families Fund, as well as creates a Maryland Food and Agriculture Resiliency Mechanism Fund that will provide grants to food banks to acquire more agriculture food products.

COVID-19 has amplified food insecurity in Maryland. When the pandemic began in April 2020, Maryland received nearly 150,000 SNAP benefit applications, a 400% increase, as compared to March.¹ In FY 2021, over 800,000 Marylanders are participating in the SNAP program.² There is a need now more than ever to address food insecurity in Maryland.

Many of our seniors are on fixed incomes and struggle with meeting their basic needs. Nearly one in five low-income seniors in Maryland struggles with hunger, resulting in Maryland having the 8th highest food insecurity rate among low-income seniors.³ Unfortunately, seniors are more likely to suffer from mental and physical health issues when they are food insecure. Food insecure seniors are over five times more likely to suffer from depression and almost two times as likely to be diabetic.⁴

HB 147 will reduce food insecurity by creating long-term funding for the Maryland Farm and Families Fund, as well as assisting local food banks acquire more agricultural products. Many communities are turning to farmers markets as part of a strategy to build sustainable local food systems. In neighborhoods with few fresh food outlets, farmers markets are a solution that requires little overhead or capital investment. By increasing the purchasing power at Farmers' Markets for Marylanders participating in federal nutrition benefits programs, these initiatives simultaneously improve the health, nutrition and food security of low-income Marylanders and generate revenue for local farmers. HB 147 is good for Maryland, good for farmers, and good for older adults on fixed incomes who rely on SNAP & food banks to stretch their grocery budgets.

For the reasons stated above, MSCAN urges a favorable report on HB 147. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ DHS Monthly Data Reports

² Ibid

³ Maryland Hunger Solutions. 2019. Senior Hunger in Maryland.

http://mdhungersolutions.org/pdf/Senior_hunger_fact_sheet_OFFICIAL.pdf

⁴ Ibid