



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony
SB562 - Maryland Small Food Banks Grant Program – Establishment
March 10, 2023
SUPPORT

TO: The Honorable Melony Griffith, Chair; The Honorable Katherine Klausmeier, Vice Chair; and Members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Dr. Jeffery Johnson, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board (CAB), the County’s local, state, and federally designated anti-poverty group, is in full support of SB562 and asks the Committee for a favorable report. This bill would establish a grant program for small food banks in the state, many of which are struggling to meet the needs of residents. Food banks provide critical support to individuals and families when other benefits like SNAP are insufficient or unavailable. Now that the increased SNAP benefits put in place during the pandemic have ended, assistance from food banks will be even more important. We also know that many people struggling with food insecurity do not qualify for SNAP in the first place. Feeding America reports that 41% of food insecure residents here in Montgomery County are not eligible for SNAP.¹ Food banks help to fill this gap for households struggling to meet their basic needs.

Support for food and nutrition programs has been a longstanding priority for our board because food insecurity remains a serious challenge here in Montgomery County and across the state. The food insecurity rate in Maryland is 9%, meaning that 543,650 residents struggle with *a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life.*² Community Action Agencies in Maryland, many of which are nonprofit organizations that host food banks and would likely qualify for the proposed grant program, are on the front lines combatting food insecurity. Our own staff, through the Department’s new Navigation Program and the Takoma-East Silver Spring (TESS) Community Action Center, work directly with clients who are experiencing food insecurity on a daily basis, linking them to services and programs. Added support for food banks would benefit these residents, providing additional resources to meet their needs. The Montgomery County Community Action Agency also partners with several local nonprofits, monitoring contracts for the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services. Many of these partners would be eligible for the grant program proposed in SB562 and could really use the added financial support to meet growing needs.

¹ <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/overall/Maryland>

² <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2020/overall/maryland>

It is important to note that food insecurity is compounded in areas like Montgomery County and so many parts of the state, where the cost of living is extremely high, and wages have not kept up. According to the Maryland Community Action Partnership's most recent report, the Montgomery County Self-Sufficiency Standard for a household with two working adults, one preschooler, and one school-age child is now \$122,943, over four times the federal poverty level.³ This same family is estimated to need \$1,207 each month just to pay for food. Building capacity for small food banks, as SB562 would do, is one important opportunity to help meet the needs of residents struggling to pay for their basic necessities.

We ask the Committee for a favorable report and ask that you consider other policies and funding opportunities to provide critical support to food distributors and other service providers.

³<https://maryland-cap.org/the-maryland-2023-self-sufficiency-standard-calculator/>