



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Senate Bill 26: Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

February 2, 2023

Written Testimony Only

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for Senate Bill 26.

HFAM represents skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our skilled nursing members provide the majority of long-term and post-acute care to Marylanders in need and can be found in nearly every jurisdiction of the state.

Senate Bill 26 requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to establish an Express Lane Eligibility Program by January 1, 2025 and to enroll individuals, based on certain eligibility. Specifically, under this legislation, MDH will establish a fast-track eligibility lane to ensure that Medicaid-qualified individuals and families in Maryland have expeditious access to much-needed services related to healthcare and nutrition, with a focus on providing restaurant and heat-and-go meals to Marylanders most in need. The Department will coordinate the proposed policies of this legislation with counties, pay the costs of such county coordination, and file for federal waivers to establish such an Express Lane Eligibility Program to the extent that a waiver is needed.

According to Feeding America, 100 percent of U.S. counties have some level of food insecurity. Such food insecurity is experienced by many different racial and ethnic groups, and by every age cohort. Sadly, children are most often the victims of food insecurity.

In my personal experience, before the pandemic, it was common for families with loved ones in a skilled nursing and rehabilitation center to eat meals in the center as part of free or discounted meal programs. Unfortunately, in many cases, those programs are less prevalent in our setting due to infectious disease prevention protocols.

People are healthier and children learn better when they have consistent access to healthcare and food. Maryland has the financial resources to take this important step forward, and such a proactive approach will likely lower healthcare and public assistance costs in future years.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report from the Committee on Senate Bill 26.

Submitted by:

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