



November 14, 2019

The Honorable Larry Hogan
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Hogan,

The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland works to create a state where an adequate amount of healthy food is both geographically and economically accessible for all residents. As you develop your FY 2021 operating budget, we encourage you to include support for the following three critical and effective programs that support low-income children and families while strengthening the local economy:

- 1) **Maryland Meals for Achievement**
- 2) **Summer SNAP for Children**
- 3) **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

1) **Maryland Meals for Achievement -- Breakfast in the Classroom Program**

Thank you for your continued support of one of the most effective anti-hunger programs in our state – the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) program. This highly successful program has supported breakfast in the classroom programs in hundreds of high-poverty schools for more than twenty years. The additional funding that was included in the state budget in FY 2019 has allowed the Maryland State Department of Education to expand the program to additional schools. Because of MMFA, **nearly 276,000 students benefit from school breakfast in the classroom** and on their behalf, we thank you.

State funding for MMFA is currently \$7.55 million and this funding supplements the federally funded School Breakfast Program in 522 schools ensuring students in those schools receive their breakfast at no cost. We know that student participation in school breakfast increases in schools with MMFA and as a result, **every dollar in state funding leverages an additional \$5.50 in federal reimbursements**. MMFA funding also **reduces child hunger, improves child health, and advances educational outcomes**.¹

Unfortunately, more than three hundred additional high-poverty schools are eligible, but unable to participate in MMFA due to insufficient funding for the program. We request an increase in the MMFA budget of an additional **\$3.9 million so that all of the more than 185,500 students in these 310 schools can benefit**.

We invite you to see the MMFA program in action and to hear from the teachers who see the impact MMFA has on their students and in their classrooms. **Please let us know when would be convenient to schedule a visit.**

2) **Summer SNAP for Children**

The first state legislation of its kind, Summer SNAP for Children has put our state in the national spotlight as a **leader in addressing the problem of summer hunger**. Food insecurity is a problem year-round but worsens during the summer months when schools are closed. In the summer, most children lose access to free or reduced-price school meals and many families struggle with higher childcare costs and grocery bills. **Maryland's innovative new Summer SNAP for Children program** builds on the existing foundation of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Food Supplement Program (FSP), which provides low-income Marylanders with monthly benefits on an electronic benefits card

¹ Source: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED460784.pdf>

(EBT). Summer SNAP for Children provides an additional state and county-funded supplemental benefit onto EBT cards during June, July, and August as well as during the winter school break. Based on research demonstrating reduced food insecurity and improved diets,² Summer SNAP for Children provides an additional \$100 per child, per year to support their health and development.

We extend our sincere thanks to the dedicated staff at the Maryland Department of Human Services who are working diligently to implement this new program quickly and efficiently. Interest and excitement has been high and most counties have expressed an intention to participate. In fact, county governments have indicated that they will contribute more than \$300,000 in local funding in addition to the \$200,000 in state funding that was appropriated by the legislature. **Regrettably, the state funding allocated for this program will only support 2,000 low-income children, a fraction of the 250,000 children in the state of Maryland who are eligible and in need.** Therefore, we request an increased state appropriation for Summer SNAP for Children, as outlined in a July 27, 2019 letter from the Critical Issues Forum, a valued member of this Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland. The Regional Economic Studies Institute (RESI) at Towson University recently analyzed the economic impact of increasing state funding for Summer SNAP for Children to \$2 million. The economists concluded that, “[b]esides further alleviating food insecurity, and thus improving quality of life for thousands more children, this proposed hike in funding **could greatly benefit Maryland’s economy.**”³

3) Minimum SNAP/FSP Monthly Benefit

More than 625,000 Marylanders rely on SNAP or FSP and they are a critical part of the safety net that helps families in our state put food on the table every day.⁴ Unfortunately, the amount of support provided through federal SNAP/FSP rules is too low to allow some families to purchase the healthy food they need. In fact, thousands of Marylanders receive the federal minimum monthly benefit -- an astonishingly low \$16.00 per month.

With a state-funded increase, all Marylanders that are eligible for SNAP/FSP can receive a minimum of at least \$30 a month to purchase food. Maryland has already taken the lead in increasing this minimum benefit level for seniors; we now ask for your support for the approximately **26,200 low-income households** in our state that still receive less than \$30 per month in food assistance. According to the most recent data available, an additional \$4.7 million in state funding will ensure that all Marylanders with SNAP/FSP will receive a meaningful benefit of at least \$30 a month. Investment in the SNAP program is an investment in local economies – **every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.80 in local economic activity**

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We understand you have difficult decisions to make as you finalize your budget for Fiscal Year 2020. **We welcome the opportunity to discuss these three priorities in more detail.**

Thank you again for your partnership in the fight against childhood hunger in Maryland.

Sincerely,

The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland

Please contact Noora Kanfash, Policy Committee Chair at nkanfash@strength.org to schedule a school breakfast visit and follow-up meeting.

² Source: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/sebtcfinalreport-summary.pdf>

³ Source: <https://www.towson.edu/campus/partnerships-research/economic-studies/documents/resi-policy-brief-food-insecurity.pdf>

⁴ A monthly average of 625,914 Marylanders participated in SNAP/FSP in FY 19, according to DHS reports.

Respectfully submitted by the Policy Committee of the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland: