

May 2020

The Honorable Ben Cardin  
The Honorable Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Cardin/Van Hollen,

The undersigned Maryland organizations are writing in support of the H.R. 6800, which passed the House of Representatives on May 15.

As organizations who work across the state of Maryland to address food insecurity, we know that the economic hardship that is sweeping Maryland is having damaging impacts on our residents in multiple ways.

H.R. 6800 is important because it addresses those economic problems by using proven economic stimulus programs that can help stabilize the economy and lessen the hardships currently faced by individuals and communities. around the country by bolstering critical federal assistance programs, such as SNAP, WIC, and Pandemic EBT, as well as providing much needed economic relief to local governments.

COVID-19 continues to have consequences on local Maryland communities, additional legislative responses are warranted. It is apparent that the economic impact of the pandemic will continue for the foreseeable future, even beyond the “stay at home” orders. In Maryland we have seen more than 300,000 Marylanders file for unemployment and more than 70,000 apply for SNAP as families face unemployment, children lose access to school meals, older adults with health concerns, and many others. H.R. 6800 will provide much needed relief to these struggling Marylanders by addressing three critical SNAP program matters:

1. Increase the maximum SNAP benefit by 15 percent;
2. Increase the minimum monthly SNAP benefit from \$16 to \$30; and
3. Place a hold on harmful rules proposed by the Executive Branch that weaken SNAP eligibility and benefits.

With this changes, H.R. 6800 will make critical investments in the economy. Research shows that during an economic downturn, each \$1 of SNAP benefits leads to between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in total economic activity. H.R. 6800 will also expand funding to local governments to address the increasing revenue shortfalls resulting from COVID-19 related response spending. After Maryland schools were mandated to close, school district food and nutrition service departments were among the first to act and continue to be a crucial community resource for families in need of nutrition assistance – especially low-income families. Unfortunately, the cost of these emergency operations has left many districts with a growing debt. Without the additional financial support of H.R. 6800, this strain could cause damaging budget cuts that will only further harm the families and communities relying on these services.

We work on the front lines here in Maryland working to address these challenges. We firmly believe that the provisions in H.R. 6800 will help to lessen the severity and duration of the economic downturn caused by COVID-19. As such, we respectfully urge you to support H.R. 6800 to provide relief that is urgently needed across the state of Maryland.

Maryland Hunger Solutions