



Maryland
Hospital Association

SB 970 – Maryland Department of Health – Special Supplemental Nutrition for Women, Infants and Children - Reports

Position: *Support*

Bill Summary

SB 970 would require the Maryland Department of Health, after consultation with certain stakeholders, to report certain information regarding the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children to certain committees of the General Assembly on or before December 1 each year, and terminate the act after June 1, 2022.

MHA Position

Under Maryland's unique Total Cost of Care agreement with the federal government, Maryland's hospitals are working to lower costs and improve population health. In addition to treating illness and injury, hospitals are reaching out beyond their four walls to keep people well and improve the health of the communities they serve. The result: hospitals are taking care of the whole person, empowering patients and families, coordinating care among different providers, and addressing social factors, such as food insecurity, that influence people's health.

Maryland's hospitals therefore support SB 970, because reporting can help track the efficacy of the program and ensure that those who are eligible for it are getting the help they need. The median U.S. household spends \$50 per person on food each week, while food-insecure households are only able to spend \$37.50 per person.¹ As a result, food-insecure households substitute cheaper, less nutritious food items for healthy foods, thus maintaining a much less-healthy and balanced diet. These households also may offset their financial limitations by eating food that is past its expiration date, watering down food and drinks to make them last longer and selling or pawning their personal property.²

For children, the lack of a balanced diet due to food insecurity not only increases the risk of chronic disease and mental illness, it also can lead to obesity and diabetes, hypertension, asthma, tooth decay, anemia, infection and birth defects, behavioral health issues, and stress and starvation.³

For these reasons, we urge that you give SB 970 a *favorable* report.

¹ Project Bread. (2009). *Hunger in the Community: Ways Hospitals Can Help*. (2009). UMass Memorial Health Care. Retrieved from

http://support.projectbread.org/site/DocServer/09_81_Hosp_Handbk_Rev2_FNL.pdf?docID=5401

² Feeding America. (2014, August). *Hunger in America 2014*. Westat and the Urban Institute. Retrieved from <http://help.feedingamerica.org/HungerInAmerica/hunger-in-america-2014-full-report.pdf>

³ Social Determinants of Health Series. (2017, June). *Food Insecurity and the Role of Hospitals*. American Hospital Association. Retrieved from <https://www.aha.org/ahahret-guides/2017-06-21-social-determinants-health-series-food-insecurity-and-role-hospitals>