



Advocates for Children and Youth improves the lives and experiences of Maryland's children and youth by advancing policies and programs across multiple issue areas that tackle racial disparities and improve outcomes to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive. www.acy.org

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

In SUPPORT

House Bill 84 - Maryland Farms and Families Fund

January 29, 2019

Advocates for Children and Youth supports House Bill 84, which would strengthen the Maryland Farms and Families Fund.

339,411 households in Maryland participated in SNAP in FY2018. In FY2016, that equaled 744,343 individuals. Ensuring that these households and individuals can leverage their funds at farmers markets will ensure access to healthy, nutritious foods for children across Maryland. HB 84 accomplishes this by putting more money directly into the hands of low-income Marylanders while shopping at farmers' markets.

Access to healthful and nutritious food is vital for the development of children. Studies have shown that children with access to nutritious food exhibit fewer behavioral problems, can better participate in school, and have better overall academic outcomes. Additionally, adequate nutrition through nutrition programs can be fundamental for growth and development, particularly during early childhood years.

This program aids not only our families, but our local businesses. For every FSP dollar spent, roughly \$1.79 is generated in local economic activity. By increasing the spending power of low-income Marylanders, particularly at farmers' markets across the state, this bill has a dual benefit by supporting both consumers and merchants. Incentivizing use of federal nutrition benefits means increased federal dollars circulating through Maryland's local economies. According to existing program data, each \$1.00 the state spends is matched by the \$1.30 in federal benefit spending. Therefore, \$350,000 in state funds will lead to \$800,000 in local farmer profit.

House Bill 84 successfully leverages federal and state dollars to support both low-income residents and our local farmers. We think this is a clear win-win in supporting Marylanders throughout the state.