



(social services Dept.)

DHR TESTIMONY BEFORE THE BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE

Informational Hearing - Changes to Food Supplement Program Benefits Schedule December 17, 2015

Chairman Curran, Madam Vice Chair Holton and members of the Health Committee. My name is Rosemary Malone and I am the Executive Director of the Family Investment Administration within the Maryland Department of Human Resources. I am pleased to provide the committee with an overview of DHR's work related to the Statewide expansion of the food stamp issuance schedule.

The food stamp distribution schedule affects the vital interests of many Maryland residents who rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to avoid hunger, especially young children, older adults, people with disabilities, working families and others who are enrolled in the SNAP program. The Department took great care when evaluating implementing a schedule change to SNAP benefits, including looking at similar models in other states and working with our U.S. Department of Agriculture program partners, to assess the risks and positive impacts such a change could bring about for Maryland.

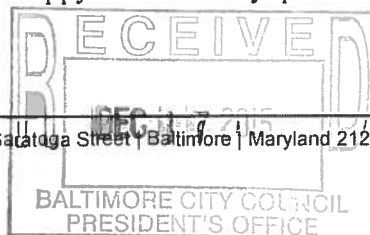
The Department is in the process of expanding the number of days each month that food stamp benefits are distributed, from 10 to 20 days each month. In August, food stamp benefits were distributed from the 6th through the 15th, and in September the issuance dates were expanded to the 5th through the 19th. In January we will further expand the dates food stamp benefits are issued, to the 4th through the 23rd. A detailed distribution chart was mailed to each SNAP recipient in August 2015 and is also included with my testimony.

The implementation of this new schedule is designed to help local grocers better serve food stamp benefit recipients across Maryland, including Baltimore City residents. The schedule was developed in conjunction with the Maryland Retailers Association, which revealed that stores were encountering problems keeping shelves adequately stocked during peak Food Supplement Program (FSP) benefit distribution days. A more evenly spread out FSP benefit distribution schedule will help ensure adequate stocking and staffing and alleviate long wait lines at registers. Most importantly, the phase-in of the schedule changes ensures food stamp benefit recipients will not have to wait more than 4 days past their old issuance date for their FSP benefits.

The Department worked closely with the Food Supplement Program Advisory Group to provide community partners, including neighborhood food pantries, with sufficient notice of program changes. In Baltimore City, the local department of social services also provided boxes of food to recipients upon request. This month we will mail all SNAP recipients a reminder distribution chart showing the January changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the committee with an update to our ongoing implementation efforts. At this time, I would happy to answer any questions you may have.

Comments



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