

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 15-0278R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmember Clarke, President Young, Councilmembers Kraft, Costello,  
Middleton, Henry, Stokes, Curran, Spector, Mosby, Scott, Welch

Introduced and read first time: December 7, 2015

Assigned to: Health Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Health Department, Department of Social Services,  
Food Policy Director

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Changes to Food Supplement Program Benefits Schedule**

3 FOR the purpose of requesting that representatives from the Health Department and the State  
4 Department of Human Resources appear before the City Council to discuss the change in the  
5 SNAP benefit distribution schedule, the short and long term pluses and minuses of this shift,  
6 and what resources are available to assist SNAP recipients who may experience difficulties in  
7 feeding their families while the benefit schedule is adjusted.

8 **Recitals**

9 The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), called the Food Supplement  
10 Program (FSP) in Maryland, formerly known as Food Stamps, helps low-income households buy  
11 the food they need for good health. Once a month, benefits for qualified recipients are issued to  
12 households on an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card – similar to a debit or credit card – for  
13 use in purchasing food.

14 In order to avoid disruptions to the food distribution system caused by large numbers of  
15 people shopping for food in a constricted time period each month, the State has staggered the  
16 release of benefits over multiple days for some time now, allotting benefits on a particular day  
17 each month to households based on the first letters of the primary recipient's last name.

18 Until recently, the benefits were delivered over a 10 day period each month. However, the  
19 compression of demand into a third of the month continued to cause difficulties for grocers in  
20 making out schedules and keeping food in stock. In an effort to address these concerns, the State  
21 recently doubled the number of days over which benefits will be distributed from 10 to 20. The  
22 shift has been staggered and will be complete by January 2016.

23 This change is intended to benefit recipients, businesses, and other consumers. The SNAP  
24 change will support the businesses by not having a rush of customers for only 2 weeks at a time.  
25 The SNAP changes are also intended to benefit recipients and other consumers by reducing wait  
26 times at stores and helping to ensure that the grocery stores are stocked with food.

27 The actual shift in distribution dates may cause waits of up to 5 additional days beyond what  
28 recipients generally have between benefit distributions in the initial month of the new schedule.

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.  
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

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1 Although this will be only a one time event, there are concerns that it could cause significant  
2 hardship for some families, and it is not clear what, if any, steps have been taken to mitigate  
3 these concerns.

4 It is essential that this shift, intended to create long-term benefits for many, not be  
5 accomplished in a way that unduly harms some of the most vulnerable of our residents. In order  
6 to best assist constituents facing confusion or challenges because of this change, the Council  
7 needs to be fully informed about the change in the SNAP distribution schedule, the short and  
8 long term benefits and drawbacks of this shift, and what resources are available to assist  
9 recipients who may experience difficulties in feeding their families while the benefit schedule is  
10 adjusted.

11 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the  
12 Council requests that representatives from the Health Department and the State Department of  
13 Human Resources appear before it to discuss the change in the SNAP benefit distribution  
14 schedule, the short and long term pluses and minuses of this shift, and what resources are  
15 available to assist SNAP recipients who may experience difficulties in feeding their families  
16 while the benefit schedule is adjusted.

17 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
18 Secretary of the Maryland Department of Human Resources, the Director of the Baltimore City  
19 Department of Social Services, the Health Commissioner, the Food Policy Director, and the  
20 Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.