



City of Baltimore

City Council
City Hall, Room 408
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Clarke

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Informational Hearing - Changes to Food Supplement Program Benefits Schedule
FOR the purpose of requesting that representatives from the Health Department and the State Department of Human Resources appear before the City Council to discuss the change in the SNAP benefit distribution schedule, the short and long term pluses and minuses of this shift, and what resources are available to assist SNAP recipients who may experience difficulties in feeding their families while the benefit schedule is adjusted.

Recitals

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

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

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

This change is intended to benefit recipients, businesses, and other consumers. The SNAP change will support the businesses by not having a rush of customers for only 2 weeks at a time. The SNAP changes are also intended to benefit recipients and other consumers by reducing wait

times at stores and helping to ensure that the grocery stores are stocked with food.

The actual shift in distribution dates may cause waits of up to 5 additional days beyond what recipients generally have between benefit distributions in the initial month of the new schedule. Although this will be only a one time event, there are concerns that it could cause significant hardship for some families, and it is not clear what, if any, steps have been taken to mitigate these concerns.

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

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

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

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