



Maryland Food System Resiliency Council

Distribution & Access Subcommittee
January 26, 2023 1:00pm-2:30pm

1. **Welcome**
2. **Group Discussion**
 - a. 2023 Topics for Consideration:
 - i. TEFAP Presentation and Discussion – Isabella Dresser, Hunger Fellow
 1. The purpose of this presentation is to examine the initial recommendation proposed by Capital Area Food Bank, looking at potential barriers and challenges in the language.
 2. TEFAP Overview:
 - a. USDA purchases a variety of nutritious, high-quality USDA Foods, and makes those foods available to state distributing agencies.
 - b. Supply from USDA is based on the number of unemployed persons and the number of people with incomes below the poverty level in each state.
 - c. The food is then distributed by food banks & community action agencies.
 - d. People access TEFAP food by (1) visiting a food shelf or (2) by eating a prepared meal at a soup kitchen, community center, or other congregate settings.
 3. Maryland's Role in TEFAP
 - a. Maryland's Statistic at a Glance:
 - i. 5,819,563 Maryland residents
 - ii. Unemployment rate: 4.5%
 - iii. Client's income must not exceed 150% of the Federal Poverty line



- b. Maryland Food Bank (MFB) and Capital Area Food Bank are in charge of distributing USDA-purchased food from TEFAP funds, per area. Capital Area Food Bank serving PG County and Montgomery County; MFB providing services for the other 21 counties, plus Baltimore City.
 - c. Requirement are a self-declaration income form and a proof of ID (which is not enforceable for recipients)
4. Recommendation Breakdown: examining each component of the recommendation language and perceived barriers or challenges.
 - a. Category One (Expanding TEFAP Eligibility): (1) increase income eligibility to 200% of the federal poverty guidelines, (2) standardize the eligibility determination process to bring more equity, efficiency and access.
 - i. Identified barriers: unintended spillover effects of relying on the food pantry distribution model: potentially overwhelming the capacity of food banks and food pantries
 1. The positive and mutually beneficial relationship of programs like Farm to Food Bank can benefit farmers and result in an increase in commodity supplied to Maryland.
 2. Shift away from relying solely on food banks and move towards creating stronger networks in the food systems
 - ii. Is this under the State's control? States set the eligibility requirement for income; population and unemployment rates are accessed in collaboration with USDA. All these factors are used to determine matrices for funding distribution.



- b. Category Two (Partnership Building): (1) establishing interstate cooperative agreements to enable greater service, (2) collaborate with key stakeholders on the state distribution plan, incentivize state participation in USDA's Reach and Resiliency Grants, (3) create more outlets for input and timely notification on commodities to nutritional and culturally appropriate standards.
 - i. Current TEFAP network: Eligibility requirements are established by MD. USDA distributed funds, based on those metrics, to each state. State receives TEFAP funds and outsources distribution responsibilities to food banks/pantries. Food banks/pantries use funds to purchase food from eligible USDA vendors. Food banks/pantries utilize their networks to supply the TEFAP food to people.
 - ii. Identified barriers: the lack of formal partnerships—particularly between communities who receive TEFAP food and the government—pose a significant barrier to achieving recommendations that prioritize Partnership Building.
 - iii. Critical Questions to consider:
 1. Who would take responsibility to establish & provide support for such partnerships?
 2. Is there enough workers and/or volunteers to commit to fact-finding endeavors?
 3. Would there need to be executive authority to ensure that interstate agreements would be successful and mutually beneficial?



- iv. Example of a successful partnership:
Local-private partnerships like Capital Area Food Bank x LindaBen Foundation
- c. Category Three (Digitize TEFAP Process): (1) incentivize usage of electronic reporting platforms and streamline reporting requirements.
 - i. Identified barriers: (1) capacity – who would take the lead in creating and maintaining a reporting platform? Would it be a state-wide platform or independent input database? (2) Enforceability – how would online reporting be enforceable (e.g. quotas, deadlines, incentives)?
 - d. Imagining TEFAP digitized: Local food bank distributors would collect data/data analysis in the field, with State or Federal support for the platform, including management of the platform.
5. Group Comments/Questions:
 - a. Background: TEFAP is split between MFB and Capital Area Food Bank. Capital Area Food Bank's geographic regions are two counties identified earlier in Maryland, DC, and part of Northern Virginia. For years, Maryland's TEFAP operations have been identified as slow, less flexible, and challenging compared to DC and Virginia. Capital Area Food Bank researched within the Feeding America network, using ten multi-jurisdictional food banks involved with TEFAP examining/comparing data. Capital Area Food Bank is prepared to lobby and advocate at the State and Federal level.
 - b. This program is underutilized in this state, in the past MFB has distributed more TEFAP food than what is distributed now. This is due to challenges maximizing the program (e.g. canceled orders,



- compliance requirements, etc.). Food distribution organizations are interested in this program because there is quality food available. Reporting is happening within the program, but it is not digitized yet.
- c. Are some qualified vendors local farms (in an optimal situation local, fresh, low pesticide, low input foods, etc.), not purveyors of canned goods? What is the selection process for qualified vendors?
 - i. USDA would need to answer this question regarding designation. TEFAP is a nationwide commodities program, it would be surprising if there is any focus on local. The focus is mostly on what is available in the commodities market, what is difficult for farmers to sell. The program was created to keep farms afloat. TEFAP foods include shelf-stable foods, frozen foods, protein, fruits/vegetables, etc.
 - ii. There is another USDA grant which focuses on local food purchases.
 - d. TEFAP is 10% of food distribution for MFB, which is a key building block. SWAP is a program used to assist in nutrition education and awareness. MFB has the ability to order and/or pick food for distribution. 55% of food purchased by MFB is vegetables and fruits.
 - e. Proof of identification is not a requirement, but local pantries are requiring photo identification. This could be due to lack of education regarding program requirements.
 - f. What were the best examples and where are the best examples identified in the research collected by Capital Area Food Bank? How much are we losing by putting up barriers?



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- g. It would be interesting to review the catalogs of TEFAP foods. Do you think TEFAP catalogs reflect 55% produce, as done with MFB?
- h. Capital Area Bank should be invited to speak.
- i. Not all pantries participate in TEFAP, the program requires a degree of readiness (e.g. cold-storage, freezers). There is capacity funding available via TEFAP, there is a bit of build-up and can be a bottleneck when preparing a partner to receive TEFAP foods.
- j. Are there other States utilizing this plan better than Maryland, and how?
- k. Program education is needed at the pantry level. Updating partners on changes in the program to promote participation.
- l. There are 150 TEFAP partners with MFB; maybe inviting MFB TEFAP teams to the committee meeting to discuss onboarding, volunteer capacity, etc. could be helpful.
- m. Would legislation be required to make changes to the program?
- n. Data collection is a barrier for undocumented individuals, when requesting identification.
- o. TEFAP foods can only be provided once a month.
- ii. SNAP/EBT
 1. Please attend Monday afternoon Communication and Coordination Committee meetings to join in discussion regarding SNAP/EBT bills:
 - a. [SB0002](#) - Department of Human Services - Electronic Benefits Transfer Cards - Fraud (Prevent Electronic Benefits Theft Act of 2023)
 - b. [HB0087/ SB0052](#) - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs - Waiver - Diapers and Menstrual Hygiene Products



2. [FSRC Legislative Tracker](#) is available for tracking bills of interest to the FSRC. Bill synopsis, progress, special notes, and council position are documented in the tracker.
3. Communication and Coordination Committee meetings have always been open to the public to ensure engagement and transparency of processes. We want to ensure sharing of information during these meetings related to bill considerations. Lastly, this year the committee will determine positions on bills on behalf of the Food System Resiliency Council, ratification from the full council will no longer be required. This process is approved by the appointed FSRC members to ensure efficiency during the session.
4. Two Bills sponsored by Senator Hester include:
 - a. [HB0032/SB0124](#) - Maryland Food System Resiliency Council: Establishing that the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council is in the Office of Resilience in the Maryland Department of Emergency Management; and altering the process for electing a co chair of the Council.
 - b. [SB0034](#) - Department of Agriculture - State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture: Establishing the State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture as a position in the Department of Agriculture.
 - i. MDA needs specialists for other components in agriculture including small farms, pastured animals, and organic food production. These account for over 98% of agriculture.
 - ii. Johns Hopkins study indicated less than 2.5% of Maryland crop land produces food.
5. We want to create structure for this committee, and identify what is within our scope, acknowledging there are other committees within the council and what we proposed the previous year. How can we have an impact on food insecurity?



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3. **Next Steps and adjourn**
 - a. Capital Area Food Bank and Maryland Food Bank Presentation