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****Maryland Food Bank Hunger Brief****

**High Grocery Prices Continue to Plague Local Families as
the Maryland Food Bank Begins FY24**

BALTIMORE – Despite reports of inflation easing, the Maryland Food Bank (MFB) kicked off its new fiscal year at a time when food prices continue to remain high, adding pressure to limited household budgets and resulting in the increased need for food assistance among Maryland families.

According to MFB’s most recent analysis of June data from the Census Bureau’s Household Pulse Survey, **an estimated 45% of Maryland adults** said their children were sometimes or often not eating enough because food was not affordable, while **36% of Maryland households** had difficulty paying for usual household expenses.

“Marylanders are struggling to make ends meet this summer due to a combination of factors, including high grocery costs, the reduction in SNAP benefits, and with kids out of school, a lack of access to free or reduced-price meals,” MFB CEO & President Carmen Del Guercio said. “With limited financial resources, they are often left with no option but to skip meals or choose cheaper, less healthy foods, compromising their well-being.”

Several neighbors MFB recently spoke to have talked about their struggle to afford food, including Arthur B., a resident of Westminster House in Baltimore City.

“I’d rather pay for things myself, but it’s just too hard. My money is fixed, and just a few years ago seemed like it would last, but it just isn’t,” he said. “How come their prices keep going up, but my money stays the same?”

The new ALICE Essentials Index, released last month by United Ways of Maryland, seems to support this sentiment, concluding that household essentials in Maryland have increased an average of 3.1% every year since 2007. The report also found that a healthy, practical diet for a family of four now costs **approximately \$1,368 per month** in Maryland, although estimates differ by household type and location.

High grocery prices have put a strain on the food bank’s budget as well, with the cost of its most popular products up 16% versus two years ago. Even so, the organization is intensifying its efforts to distribute more healthy foods in FY24, proactively managing its menu to ensure a variety of fresh food options from Maryland-based food producers are accessible to MFB community partners.

“We recognize that access to nutritious food has been an ongoing challenge for many of the vulnerable populations we serve, which is why we’re so focused on providing our community partners with high quality, locally-sourced produce, meat, milk, eggs, and even seafood that offer our neighbors the nutrition they need,” Del Guercio explained. “The cost associated with this is significant but manageable, thanks to the Local Food Purchase Agreement in partnership with the USDA, the State of Maryland and the Maryland Department of Agriculture. We think it’s worth it because when people eat better, they live better lives.”

(more)

The food bank's FY24 budget accounts for these challenges (both high demand and higher prices) while continuing to execute across each pillar of MFB's strategic plan, also known as [MFB 3.0](#). This includes ongoing support of MFB community partners through grant funding opportunities and expanded activation of its Mobile Market Program, among other strategic investments in projects that address the root causes of hunger and help move beyond immediate needs to make a lasting, sustainable impact on Marylanders.

About the Maryland Food Bank

The Maryland Food Bank is a nonprofit hunger-relief organization dedicated to feeding people, strengthening communities, and ending hunger for more Marylanders by partnering with local organizations from the western mountains to the Eastern Shore. The food bank's statewide network of food assistance brings enough resources together to provide more than 111,000 meals every day (over 40 million meals annually) to hungry children, seniors, veterans, and hard-working families, meeting the immediate needs of hungry Marylanders while simultaneously working to create pathways out of hunger. To learn more about the Maryland Food Bank, visit www.mdfoodbank.org.

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