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Jewish Community Relations Council
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Maryland Community Action Partnership

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Maryland Hunger Solutions

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Legislative Committee

National Council on Alcoholism & Drug
Dependence – Maryland Chapter

Public Justice Center

St. Vincent de Paul Society

United Way of Central Maryland

Welfare Advocates

Maryland Alliance for the Poor

Branden McLeod, Chair

P: (410) 727-6367 x 2345

C: (443) 310-0648

E: bmcleod@mdnnonprofit.org

Marylandallianceforthe poor.blogspot.com

HB1135

Property Tax Credit - Grocery Stores - Low-Income Areas

House Ways and Means Committee,

Thursday, March 11, 2010

Submitted by Branden McLeod, Chair

The Maryland Alliance for the Poor (MAP) is a statewide coalition of advocacy organizations, service providers, and faith communities working together to advocate on behalf of Marylanders living in or near poverty. HB 1135 authorizes local jurisdictions to offer a property tax credit to grocery stores in low-income areas. As this will help make nutritious, affordable food available to low-income Marylanders, MAP supports HB 1135.

Studies show that food stores in low-income areas tend to be small shops that do not offer the same variety of goods as larger supermarkets. Often it is fresh, nutritious food that is not available. This is a health concern as the CDC reports poor nutrition can lead to obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and some types of cancer.

In addition to being a health issue, the lack of full scale grocery stores in low-income areas is also an economic issue. According to the Brookings Institute Study, "From Poverty, Opportunity," grocery stores are more expensive in lower income neighborhoods. This is partially attributable to the fact that smaller stores have lower economies of scale. Furthermore, when individuals travel to supermarkets in other areas, they are faced with paying transportation costs and a time-consuming trip especially if they are using public transportation. Buying food becomes yet another barrier to moving out of poverty.

Larger, full-scale supermarkets will not only bring a healthier selection of food, but also lower prices to low-income areas. HB 1135 would provide the local jurisdictions with a tool to attract their business. MAP respectfully requests your favorable vote on HB 1135.

