Community Advocacy Guide:
Bill 24-0419: No Senior Hungry Omnibus Amendment Act of 2021
Public Hearing: February 14, 2022
The bill can be accessed here: https://lims.dccouncil.us/Legislation/B24-0419

The DC Food Policy Council (FPC) is a coalition of local food leaders and government representatives appointed by Mayor Muriel Bowser to promote a more equitable, healthy, and sustainable food system in the District. The FPC creates Community Advocacy Guides on District food-related legislation to educate and inform residents about the legislation and how to testify.

Background

Senior food insecurity is a persistent and growing problem in DC, negatively impacting the health, quality of life, and independence of DC seniors.1 In 2019, the District had the highest senior food insecurity rate among U.S. states at 13.5%,2 an increase from 9.6% in 2016.3 Although no reliable data exists for senior food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic, elevated nutrition program usage by DC seniors suggests that senior food insecurity has remained high. The number of DC seniors impacted by food insecurity is expected to grow in the coming decade, as the senior population in DC is expected to increase by over 20,000 by 2030.4,5 Reducing this trend will require coordinating efforts between government agencies to identify and address barriers to senior food security.

In 2021, Councilmember Mary Cheh convened a working group of District agencies, community leaders, public health professionals, and nutrition providers to better understand the successes, challenges, and barriers to combatting senior hunger in the District. These discussions resulted in the creation of the No Senior Hungry Omnibus Amendment Act of 2021 which aims to address senior food insecurity in the District.

What does this bill do?

On October 1, 2021, the No Senior Hungry Omnibus Amendment Act of 2021 was introduced by six DC Councilmembers. The bill proposes to:

- Create an Interagency Senior Food Insecurity Taskforce made up of nongovernmental service providers and seniors receiving services to advise the Mayor in the implementation of policies and outreach efforts;

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• Create a Senior Food Security Plan, prepared by the Interagency Taskforce, that will:
  o Report on the current state of senior hunger in the District;
  o Identify all senior nutrition services, including any gaps and overlapping services;
  o Create recommendations for improving existing nutrition programs for seniors.
• Require the Department of Aging and Community Living (DACL) to create and implement a communications plan to increase outreach to seniors, including how to make existing and future interfaces more user-friendly.
• Beginning in 2025, require DACL to submit an annual report on the state of senior hunger in the District, including participation rates in programs, the senior food insecurity rate, participant satisfaction in programs, and progress towards the recommendations made in the Senior Food Security Plan.
• Improve DACL nutrition services by centralizing services for seniors.
• Require the Department of Human Services (DHS) to reduce application and recertification requirements for seniors who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
• Require the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to identify and provide technical assistance to nonparticipating adult day care centers to enroll them in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) which provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children and adults.
• The Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF) will expand the services in the Elderly and Persons with Physical Disabilities waiver to include home-delivered meals, nutrition supplements, and medical nutrition therapy. DHCF will require case managers for the waiver to screen for nutritional needs and food insecurity and address those needs through a person-centered service plan.

How can I give input on this bill?

The DC Council’s Committee on Housing and Executive Administration, chaired by Councilmember Anita Bonds, has scheduled a virtual public hearing via Zoom on Monday, February 14th, 2022, at 10am.

Anyone can testify on this bill, even if you are not a DC resident. Anyone wishing to testify should email the Committee at housing@dccouncil.us or call the Committee by phone at (202) 724-8198 at least 2 business days before the hearing (by Thursday, February 10, 2022). Please provide your name, address, telephone number, email address, and indicate that you wish to testify on the No Senior Hungry Omnibus Amendment Act of 2021. If you are testifying on behalf of an organization, please provide the name the organization and your role with the organization. Each witness will receive an individual Zoom invitation for the hearing in a separate e-mail. It is encouraged, but not required, to submit your testimony in writing as well to housing@dccouncil.us must submit written testimony by or before Monday, February 21, 2022.
Tips on testifying virtually:

As an individual, you will have 3 minutes to speak. If you represent an organization, you will have 5 minutes to speak. Your written testimony can be as long as you like and include more information than you read aloud in your allotted time. Remember that one page of double-spaced text (about 250 words) takes about 2 minutes to read aloud. After you testify, Councilmembers may ask follow-up questions about your testimony. It’s ok if you’re not an expert or don’t know the answer to a question. You can always say, “I’ll get back to you.”

You will not be assigned a specific time to testify but rather you will be expected to be present when your name is called. You may estimate when this will be based on the witness list that is shared the day before the hearing. When it is your turn to testify, you will be called on. You will need to have access to be on Zoom. The virtual hearing will be publicly visible.

Tips on writing testimony:
1. Thank Committee Chair Anita Bonds for convening this hearing and considering this bill;
2. Greet any other Councilmembers who are present;
3. Briefly introduce yourself and/or your organization/business;
4. Explain why you care about senior hunger in the District;
5. Explain how one or more pieces of this bill will make a difference to you, your organization, or your community;
6. Express any concerns or suggestions you have to improve this bill;
7. Close by thanking the Councilmember(s) for listening and re-stating clearly whether you think the Council should make this legislation a law in DC.

Be sure to practice reading your testimony aloud before the hearing and time how long it takes you. Practicing will help stay within the time limits and make your points clearly and succinctly.

What can I do if I can’t testify that day?

You can still submit written testimony to the Committee on Housing and Executive Administration, John A. Wilson Building, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 5, Washington, DC 20004, or by email at housing@dccouncil.us. All information must be received by 5:00 pm on Monday, February 21, 2022.