Testimony before the House Appropriations Committee
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Chairperson McIntosh and members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1273.

My name is Matthew Glans. I am senior policy analyst at The Heartland Institute, a 34-year-old national nonprofit research and education organization. The Heartland Institute is headquartered in Illinois and focuses on providing national, state, and local elected officials with reliable and timely research and analyses on important policy issues.

More than 20 years after the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act was first enacted, many states have seized the opportunities offered by the law, developing thoughtful policies and integrating services needed to help recipients move into the workplace. However, in other states, the current mix of welfare and anti-poverty programs is acting as a disincentive for work, trapping welfare recipients in a cycle of long-term poverty.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the fourth-largest means-tested program for low-income families and individuals. One of the biggest problems with SNAP and a primary reason it grew so rapidly during the recent recession is most states have not set limits on SNAP benefits or require recipients to actively seek employment.

Under current law, able-bodied adults without dependents are only able to receive SNAP for three years if they do not meet certain work requirements. This restriction, which was first introduced in 1996, is known as "time limits." To receive SNAP benefits beyond this limit, able-bodied adult recipients who do not have dependents must work at least 80 hours per month, participate in qualifying education and training activities at least 80 hours per month, or comply with a state workfare program.

Before 2009, most states enforced the time limit, along with work requirements, but many states waived those requirements between 2009 and 2010. As a result, 44 percent of SNAP recipients are neither employed nor actively searching for work. According to The Heritage Foundation's *Daily Signal*, the SNAP caseload for low-income, able-bodied adults without children has skyrocketed over the past decade, from 900,000 in 2008 to 4.2 million in 2017, creating an additional cost of $8.5 billion per year for taxpayers.

In the past few years, states have begun to reinstate SNAP time limits and work requirements. Some did so of their own accord, while other states were no longer deemed eligible by the federal government to waive the requirements. Although some people will lose their food stamp benefits as these waivers end, the growth of SNAP is unsustainable.

Kansas' recently reduced lifetime limit is just one example of what successful state-based reforms look like. In 2015, Kansas implemented a three-year lifetime limit on the time people can spend on welfare, with some exceptions made for emergencies. In a study by the Foundation for Government Accountability (FGA), Nic Horton and Jonathan Ingram examine Kansas' welfare reforms, which they say caused individuals to reenter the labor force. Horton and Ingram also argue the incomes of Kansas families exiting TANF increased substantially because of the reforms, more than doubling in the first year alone.

According to the FGA study, families who left TANF are, as of 2017, earning $48 million more per year than they did while receiving government cash assistance. The new incomes of those leaving the welfare system increased 104 percent in one year, $20 million more than they had while on welfare. Four years after the reforms, the individual incomes for these people increased by 247 percent.

Time limits also had a strong effect on the number of SNAP recipients in Georgia. The Georgia Public Policy Foundation claims by the end of the first three months of the state's restored work requirements, the number of adults receiving benefits in three participating Georgia counties dropped by 58 percent.

Time limits are not an unreasonable restriction on food stamp benefits, and they help ensure states' assistance programs do not trap low-income citizens in poverty by disincentivizing work. Time limits can be an effective reform tool for states; they allow them to manage welfare costs and encourage recipients to take control of their own financial well-being. Maryland should carefully consider this important legislation.

Thank you for your time.

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