

**HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF
HB 559 – FAMILY INVESTMENT PROGRAM –
TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE – FUNDING**

**House Appropriations Committee
February 18, 2020**



Health Care for the Homeless supports HB 559, which would slowly raise Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) to 71% of the Maryland Minimum Living Level – when combined with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits – over the course of five (5) years.

Health Care for the Homeless, who is Maryland’s leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, understands the critical importance of TCA to some of Maryland’s most vulnerable families. For many of our clients and their families, TCA is a lifeline. Our clients utilize this assistance to pay their rent, purchase food, and help meet their basic needs. Access to assistance programs such as TCA increase health outcomes, housing stability and financial stability.

Unfortunately, TCA is not currently meeting the need. Increasing the benefit amount will allow families to have a greater financial stability, which can assist in locating work, moving off of TCA permanently, and building economic security.

Poverty is often temporary—health care, housing, food assistance and cash assistance programs specifically lift people out of poverty, and help them attain self-sufficiency. A person’s income, generally cannot be greater than 120% above the maximum benefit level (or greater than 140% to continue to receive TCA). While individuals are not well off when they receive TCA, programs like TCA help individuals and families get through periods of hardship and thrive in our communities.

Raising TCA is critical to maintaining health and stability and has direct benefits to our communities and to society at large and we request a favorable report on this bill.

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland’s leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We work to prevent and end homelessness for vulnerable individuals and families by providing quality, integrated health care and promoting access to affordable housing and sustainable incomes through direct service, advocacy, and community engagement. We deliver integrated medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, and housing support services for over 10,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. For more information, visit www.hchmd.org.