



Testimony Concerning HB 1313
“Family Investment Administration – Temporary Cash Assistance – Eligibility”
Submitted to the House Appropriations Committee
March 3, 2020

Position: Support

Maryland Family Network (MFN) strongly supports HB 1313, which would eliminate full-family sanctions in the Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program. While still allowing sanctions to be applied to a portion of TCA grants in cases where that is deemed necessary, the legislation would legally establish that 75% of the grant is the child’s or children’s portion and not subject to sanction.

MCC has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on welfare reform and are strongly committed to ensuring that low- and moderate-income working families have the supports they need to care for their children and be economically self-sufficient.

When an adult does not meet certain participation requirements, Maryland imposes full-family sanctions, meaning families lose their entire benefit for up to 30 days. According to research by the University of Maryland School of Social Work, sanctions occur at high rates, and can be imposed erroneously and inconsistently for minor violations. Low-income families who lose their full benefits are often unable to pay rent, bills, access transportation for school and work, and meet their basic household needs. Meanwhile, they typically confront the significant challenges associated with limited education, limited transportation access, living in areas of concentrated poverty, and a lack of job options.

More than 70% of TCA recipients in Maryland are children, and the many hardships caused by poverty are magnified for them. This legislation would establish that 75% percent of families’ TCA grants belongs to their children and cannot be sanctioned or reduced, while the remaining 25% of the TCA grant is considered the adult portion and subject to sanction. This is a critically important shift. If and when it is necessary to sanction grant recipients, this bill strikes an appropriate balance between deterring an adult participant who has fallen out of compliance while preserving household income so that the family doesn’t fall further into deep poverty.

MFN urges your favorable consideration.