

Senate Bill 787
Family Investment Program – Temporary Cash Assistance - Eligibility

Senate Finance Committee
March 6, 2020

Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports SB 787, which alters the sanctioning process for Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) recipients and establishes in statute good cause exemptions.

Inspired by the gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. As the largest human service provider in Maryland working with tens of thousands of youth and families each year, we recognize the important role Maryland's safety-net programs play in helping children and their caretakers make ends meet and build economic security.

SB 787 will alter the sanctioning process in Maryland to better support families and lift children and their caretakers out of poverty.

- **Ending full-family sanctions and moving to partial sanctions.** Maryland is required to enforce a sanctioning process by the federal government in the event of non-compliance with a work activity, such as arriving late or missing a shift. Currently, Maryland TCA recipients receive a single-day full-family sanction for the first instance of non-compliance, 10 days for the second, and 30 days for the third and every instance thereafter. This sanction drastically reduces the household income. SB 787 requires that 75% of the benefit be set aside for the child and cannot be sanctioned. The remaining 25% of the adult portion can be sanctioned for the same lengths of time at 30% for each instance of non-compliance.
- **Outlining in statute good cause exemptions for non-compliance.** The 2019 Life After Welfare for Maryland reports that almost 1 in 3 families that left TCA did so because they had received a work sanction.¹ The University of Maryland School of Social Work found that of TCA cases subjected to work requirements in Maryland, in a single year 60% of the cases had at least one work sanction.² This raises concerns that work sanctions are not being appropriately applied, and studies show that sanctioned recipients tend to have more barriers including limited education and work history, physical health and mental health problems, and instances of domestic violence.³ SB 787 will outline good cause exemptions for sanctions, such as homelessness, eviction, and utility cut off, or when the adult demonstrates there are mitigating reasons for why participation in work requirements were not met.

Of Temporary Cash Assistance recipients, nearly 75% are children.⁴ Sanctioning the full-family benefit only harms these children and drives marginalized families further into deep poverty.

On behalf of the individuals and families we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 787.

Submitted By: Regan K. Vaughan, Director of Advocacy

¹University of Maryland School of Social Work Ruth Young Center for Families and Children. *Life After Welfare: 2019 Annual Update*. <https://ywcss.com/sites/default/files/pdf-resource/lifafterwelfare.pdf>

² University of Maryland School of Social Work Ruth Young Center for Families and Children. (2016). *Are Welfare Recipients with the Most Severe Work Sanction Particularly Disadvantaged*. <https://familywelfare.umaryland.edu/reports1/sanctionscharacteristics.pdf>

³ Wu, C-F., Cancian, M., & Wallace, G. (2014). *The Effect of Welfare Sanctions on TANF Exits and Employment*. Children and Youth Services Review.

⁴ Department of Human Services Family Investment Administration. *Temporary Cash Assistance, 2019*. <http://dhs.maryland.gov/documents/Data%20and%20Reports/FIA/Statistical%20Reports/2019-All-Prg-MoStat-Public-Web-w-Charts-PRELIMINARY-10.pdf>