

THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure the budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and well-being.

Senate Finance Committee

SB 787 – Family Investment Program – Temporary Cash Assistance - Eligibility Support

March 6, 2020

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children (CPMC) is a consortium of Maryland organizations and individuals formed in 1996 to promote meaningful child welfare reform. CPMC strongly supports legislation that reduces Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) for children and youth. As SB 787 would prevent children from completely losing their primary source of income, CPMC urges a favorable report.¹

Preparing Maryland for a prosperous future begins with recognizing that our youngest residents must get what they need today to become the adults who will strengthen our communities and build our economy. Fortunately, what our children need is not a mystery. Recent advances in the science of early childhood development tell us that the early years are a time when the brain is literally building itself from the ground up, in much the way a house is constructed. And, it is the relationships and experiences children have early in life that are the building blocks for the skills they need to remain healthy, and to succeed in school, in relationships, and in the workforce. **When children have stable, responsive relationships with caring adults at home and in the community, they get off to a good start with a strong foundation to become healthy, productive and caring members of our communities.**

Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) provides cash assistance to children and their caretakers. Funded by the TANF block grant, Maryland has great flexibility in how it administers the program. There have been some advancements and changes in the program that recognize the difficult circumstances TCA recipients deal with on a regular basis. However, other policies such as the full family sanction hark back to the welfare reform days of the 1990's where the mentality of the time dictated harsh punitive sanctions when families were out of compliance with work activities and other requirements.

Studies that have looked at sanctioning practices and their effect on children have found "that children in sanctioned families are more likely to experience hardship and disruptions that can have long-term implications."² These negative effects include being more likely to be hospitalized, more likely to be food insecure, more school disruptions and a statistically significant increase in child neglect.³ If we want to break the cycle of poverty by providing children with a foundation to launch from, the State should not be punitively removing the only source of income a family has.

For those reasons stated above we urge a favorable committee report on SB 787.

¹ The following members have signed onto this testimony: Advocates for Children and Youth, Associated Catholic Charities, Baltimore Child Abuse Center, Board of Childcare, Child Justice, Inc., Citizens Review Board for Children, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Family Tree, Foster Change Network, Franklin Law Group, Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Diana Philip, and the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect.

² "TANF Studies Show Work Requirement Proposals for Other Programs Would Harm Millions, Do Little to Increase Work." Ladonna Pavetti, Ph.D., *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*. November 13, 2008. Accessed at: https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/tanf-studies-show-work-requirement-proposals-for-other-programs-would#_ftn7

³ Ibid.