



Voices Maryland

Committee: Ways and Means, Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB0612-- "EMERGENCY BILL"

Organization: Voices Maryland

Person Submitting: Sarahia Benn, Legislative Executive

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 4, 2021

Chairpersons and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing testimony today in support of HB0612. Voices Maryland is a grassroots organization focused on State and County level legislation and policies that impacts marginalized communities and veterans affairs. Judicial and criminal justice reform legislation is of massive importance to these communities particularly due to how impacted these communities have been historical and currently.

We have a rainy day fund: If there was ever a time Maryland needed use of the rainy day funds it is now in the covid 19 pandemic. Ever rising unemployment, evictions, underemployment, illness, and all things that have impacted our way of life has deeply impacted marginalized and veteran's communities a 100 times harder.

Thus far there have been two offers presented by Governor Hogan and Comptroller Franchot. Governor Hogan's covid relief offer was a bunch of tax cuts but a tax cut does not fill the belly that is empty of a child that resides in a low income area or a veteran that is struggling to pay bills due to partially being disabled. Comptroller Franchot has presented a slightly better covid relief offer with direct deposit and deposit on reloadable debit cards with additional monies to dependents based on income levels.

My suggestion is that the annual income should be moved up to 75k per year or less with much of what the Comptroller Franchot states. The reasoning is that many who made that in the past are not today. There are musicians, artists, and other professionals that have been effectively out of work for over a year due to this pandemic of which I believe need an additional stimulus to this stimulus so what they made the prior year has zero impact on what is today. Many people still live on a budget of paycheck to literally paycheck no matter the level.

“History has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own.” –Michelle Obama

(Dedicated to Black History month)

For these reasons we urge you to vote favorably for HB0612.