



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 562
Human Services - Temporary Cash Assistance - Housing Allowance

This bill will provide a monthly housing allowance to very low-income households who receive Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) or transitional support services who are not receiving other government housing assistance.

Eligible households would receive a monthly housing benefit of at least \$350 for a household of one and an additional \$100 for each additional household member. Only families that do not live in public housing, receive a Section 8 voucher, or benefit from other government housing assistance could participate. The benefits would continue for six months following the termination of TCA so long as the household is eligible to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, thereby significantly reducing the risk of homelessness for these families.

Great Need for Affordable Housing, Not Enough Supply

Maryland is experiencing an affordable housing crisis. Our state currently lacks 85,000 affordable housing units—a number that will double this decade, according to a study funded by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development.

Waitlists for Section 8 housing vouchers are exceedingly long, forcing many households to wait for an average of 2-5 years, leaving many low-income families struggling to afford housing in the private market.¹

Many housing authorities have closed their waitlists to new applications because of the high number of applicants already on the waitlist and insufficient housing options. For instance, the waitlist in Baltimore City has been closed since 2019, Baltimore County since 2018, and Prince George's County since 2015.

Housing Unaffordability

Without government housing assistance, very low-income Maryland families are exceptionally unlikely to be able to afford housing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

¹ Acosta, S., & Gartland, E. (2021, July 22). *Families wait years for housing vouchers due to inadequate funding*. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

has determined that fair market rent in Baltimore County, Baltimore City, and Anne Arundel County is \$1,548 per month. Similarly, fair market rent in Prince George's County and Montgomery County is \$1,838 per month.

Temporary Cash Assistance benefits are not sufficient to cover housing costs in addition to other living expenses. The maximum monthly TCA benefit for an eligible family of three is only \$727—less than half of fair market rent in Maryland.

Housing Supplements in Other States

Six states provide supplemental housing benefits through their Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs (the equivalent of Maryland's TCA program). Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Vermont each provide funds that increase families' ability to pay for housing when they don't receive other government housing assistance. These states' benefits span a range of up to a maximum of \$500 per month.

Why This Bill is Needed

The low-income families who receive TCA would benefit greatly from receiving housing assistance to help afford their rent without sacrificing other necessities. The new housing benefit proposed in this bill is especially needed as 70 percent of the individuals served by Maryland's TCA program are children.

Housing has been identified as a social determinant of health, emphasizing the effect housing has on quality of life and longevity. When people experience housing insecurity (e.g. unstable housing or homelessness) or low quality housing they are more likely to be in poorer health and have higher healthcare utilization.^{2,3}

The shortage of low-income housing often forces families to live in crowded housing with extended family or roommates. Crowded housing is associated with an increased risk of chronic health conditions and psychological distress, creating further hardship for parents and negatively impacting the family unit.⁴

Maryland can and should leverage TCA to help low-income families experiencing or at risk of experiencing housing instability or homelessness. This additional aid will enable very low income families to afford rent and have a measure of stability and security. Keeping a roof over our children's heads is the first step to fulfilling Governor Moore's vision of ending childhood poverty.

² Boch, S. J., Taylor, D. M., Danielson, M. L., Chisolm, D. J., & Kelleher, K. J. (2020). 'Home is where the health is': Housing quality and adult health outcomes in the survey of income and program participation. *Preventive Medicine*, 132, 105990.

³ Sims, M., Kershaw, K. N., Breathett, K., Jackson, E. A., Lewis, L. M., Mujahid, M. S., & Suglia, S. F. (2020). Importance of housing and Cardiovascular Health and well-being: A scientific statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*, 13(8).

⁴ Solari, C. D., & Mare, R. D. (2011). Housing crowding effects on children's wellbeing. *Social Science Research*, 41(2), 464–476.