



**Date:** February 28, 2023

**Committee:** Appropriations

**Bill:** House Bill 562- Human Services – Temporary Cash Assistance – Housing Allowance

**Position:** Favorable with Amendments

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This testimony is offered on behalf of the Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA). MMHA is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose membership consists of owners and managers of more than 207,246 rental housing homes in more than 937 apartment communities. Our members house over 667,000 residents of the State of Maryland throughout the entire State of Maryland. MMHA membership also includes more than 216 associate members that supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry. More information is available at <https://www.mmhaonline.org/>

House Bill 562 (HB 562) requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to administer a supplemental housing allowance benefit to recipients of the Temporary Cash Assistance Program (TCA). Each eligible household would receive a minimum additional benefit of \$350/month for a household of 1, and an additional \$100/month per additional household member.

MMHA supports the intention of this bill, but the bill's current posture provides insufficient guidance on how it would be implemented. Many TCA recipients receive their monthly benefit on an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. While the bill stipulates the housing allowance is to be provided as a separate issuance, it is unclear how the Department would ensure it is used for the intended purpose once the cash benefit is transferred. Moreover, implementation would likely require housing providers to develop and offer new payment technology that would allow rent payments to be made via EBT card—a capability that does not currently exist. For instance, a simpler and more direct approach may be to restructure the program to allow payments to be made directly to the recipient's housing provider.

MMHA would support an iteration of this bill that addresses these questions, and therefore requests a favorable report with amendments.

For more information, please contact Lauren C. Graziano, Senior Government Affairs Manager, 518.522.3529