



**MARYLAND**  
**LEGAL AID**

*Advancing*  
**Human Rights and**  
**Justice for All**

The Honorable Senator Melony G. Griffith, Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: Testimony of Maryland Legal Aid in Support of SB 160 (Human Services – Temporary Cash Assistance – Calculation of Benefits)**

Dear Chairman Griffith and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of SB 160. This bill requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to end the practice of reducing a Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) benefit if the recipients also receive housing assistance. TCA exclusively benefits families with minor children.<sup>1</sup> The funds derive from the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF), so TCA provides cash assistance to families with the lowest incomes in the state. It helps parents pay for rent, utilities, and necessities, which reduces homelessness and improves children's health, development, and education.<sup>2</sup> This letter serves as notice that Cornelia Bright Gordon Esq., will testify on behalf of MLA in support of SB160 at the request of Senator Hettleman.

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) is Maryland's largest civil non-profit law firm that provides free legal services to indigent residents. MLA assists individuals and families in every Maryland county with a wide array of civil legal issues, including protecting people from the epidemic of income and housing instability.

TCA funds help Maryland families succeed at work, leverage short term benefits in times of crisis, and reduce housing insecurity. It is well established that TCA funds also reduce food insecurity and child poverty. The current Maryland process, which reduces TCA funds by the amount of a housing subsidy (typically \$60), is in direct contrast with current research on poverty reduction and the need to utilize TCA/ TANF funds to reduce instability among the poorest of families. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities notes that these funds provide assistance exclusively to families with the lowest incomes in the nation. *Id.*

SB 160 will address the inherent impropriety of reducing the limited funds supplied by TCA even further. The subtraction of a housing subsidy from a

<sup>1</sup> TCA recipients receive Medicaid and SNAP benefits as well as cash assistance.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/tanf-can-be-a-critical-tool-to-address-family-housing-instability>

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family's TCA grant undermines the purpose of the program, is patently unfair, and serves no purpose.

MLA supports SB 160 and urges a favorable report and the passage of the bill.

Sincerely,

CBGordon  
Director of Advocacy for Administrative Law  
Maryland Legal Aid