



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 160

Human Services – Temporary Cash Assistance – Calculation of Benefits

Senate Finance Committee

February 2, 2023

Submitted by Kali Schumitz and Mark Huffman, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

211 Maryland

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports SB 160, which requires the Department of Human Services to end the practice of reducing a Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) benefit – typically by \$60/month - if the TCA recipient also receives housing assistance.

Low-income families should not be punished for accessing more than one safety net program. The TCA program serves families with children who live in deep poverty, and families use their benefits to purchase food, transportation, utilities, and meet other basic needs. While TCA is a critical safety net, the benefit amount is only statutorily required to meet 61.25% of the Maryland Minimum Living Level when combined with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), leaving families who receive the full benefit still struggling to make ends meet on an amount that is – by definition – not enough to live on in Maryland.

The federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program provides states with a multitude of options for how they administer their cash assistance programs. States do have the option under federal rules to reduce cash benefits if a family also receives a housing voucher or lives in public housing. However, Maryland is one of just a handful of states that have chosen this option. Families currently receive \$60 less in TCA per month if they are fortunate enough to also be enrolled in a program that helps them stay housed – a significant amount of money for families living in deep poverty.

Low-income Marylanders are often forced to make impossible choices – deciding which basic necessities they must forgo – because their budget is far less than what is minimally required to live in Maryland. Our state safety net programs should not make this worse by taking away much-needed cash assistance.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 160.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.