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Marylanders Against Poverty

Kali Schumitz, Co-Chair

P: 410-412- 9105 ext 701

E: kschumitz@mdeconomy.org

Mark Huffman, Co-Chair

P: (301) 776-0442 x1033

E: MHuffman@laureladvocacy.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 02

Department of Human Services - Electronic Benefits Transfer Cards - Fraud (Prevent Electronic Benefits Theft Act of 2023)

Senate Finance Committee

February 23, 2023

Submitted by Kali Schumitz and Mark Huffman, Co-Chairs

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports with amendments SB 02, which provides retroactive benefits to victims who experienced cash or food benefit theft, creating reporting requirements for the Department of Human Services to track theft of benefits, and protect families from future theft by enhancing security of EBT cards via chip technology, suspicious activity alerts, and card-locking mechanisms.

Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) theft has been on the rise in the country over the last two years. This has affected at least 2,300 households in Maryland alone who have lost nearly \$2 million in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) and cash benefits such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF/TCA) and the Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP).

Enacting this legislation will align Maryland with other states that are taking action to address the rise in benefit theft. Michigan, Massachusetts, and the District of Columbia have each enacted legislation or established pathways to restoring benefits and making families whole.

We recommend this bill be amended to reflect similar legislation in SB401. These amendments include not requiring the household to file a police report as evidence of theft, retroactively restoring benefits in a timely manner beginning January 1, 2020, and to allow recipients to dispute reimbursement requests that are denied following existing practices in place at the Department of Human Services.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 02.

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.