

February 20, 2024

The Honorable Luke Clippinger  
Chair, Judiciary Committee  
House Office Building, Room 101  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 892 - Criminal Law - Benefits Trafficking - POSITION:  
FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide favorable testimony for House Bill 892 (HB 892). With offices in every Maryland jurisdiction, DHS helps Marylanders in economic need, provides preventive services, and protects children and adults. The Family Investment Administration (FIA) within DHS administers the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), two federally funded programs, affected by HB 892.

We believe HB 892 will reduce the trafficking of public benefits by deterring criminals from exploiting the individuals and families we serve across our programs. With the increase in Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) benefit theft over the last two years, HB 892 would add to the preventive measures DHS has either implemented or plans to implement. Among other measures taken over the last nine months, we launched a new system feature enabling customers to lock their EBT card while it is not in use. We also implemented activity alerts so customers can detect and mitigate potential theft in real time.

HB 892 would add further protection to the approximately 370,000 SNAP households and 17,000 TANF households, all of whom participate in programs administered by FIA.

The Family Investment Administration also disburses Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP) and Public Assistance to Adults (PAA) on EBT cards. Therefore, we recommend including TDAP and PAA among the qualified "Government Benefits." The amendment would protect cash benefits for an annual average of 9,414 people enrolled in TDAP and 2,107 enrolled in PAA. We recommend the following amendments to extend protections that HB 892 would provide to all key public benefit programs. We propose to include the following language on page 3, under § 3-1301(F) to add the state general funds funded programs as such:

(F) "GOVERNMENT BENEFITS" INCLUDES:

- (1) MEDICARE;
- (2) MEDICAID;
- (3) TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF);
- (4) SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC); ~~AND~~
- (5) SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP);;



**(6) TEMPORARY DISABILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TDAP); AND  
(7) PUBLIC ASSISTANCE TO ADULTS (PAA).**

We appreciate the opportunity to offer favorable testimony with recommended amendments to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. We look forward to the decision of the Committee and welcome continued collaboration on HB 892.

If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at [rachel.sledge@maryland.gov](mailto:rachel.sledge@maryland.gov).

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rafael López', written in a cursive style.

Rafael López  
Secretary