

Written statement in support of HB 935, Emergency Community Services Fund
Dr. Laurie Taylor-Mitchell, President, Student Support Network, Baltimore County

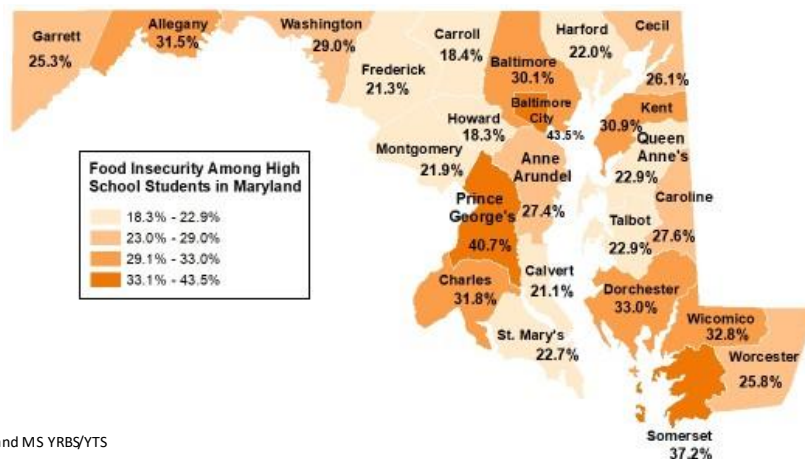
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Given the tremendous need and suffering endured by families in poverty since the beginning of the current pandemic, it is essential to have funds that are rapidly available following a declaration of a state of emergency by the Governor. In our experience, the most immediate needs are food, and essential household supplies such as soap, toilet paper, and diapers. We desperately need a state-wide structure to organize the purchase and distribution of food and essential supplies during emergency situations that can last for months, such as the current crisis.

An important feature of HB935 bill is that the Department of Budget and Management would administer the fund, not the Governor. This fiscal independence would facilitate rapid support for the immediate needs of our most vulnerable citizens. But the bill also gives the Governor flexibility to add funding for the specified Community Services, namely food, rental assistance, and energy assistance. In times of emergency, especially for children, the prevention of hunger and homelessness are paramount. Hungry children cannot learn, and recent research on the effects of homelessness on children is clear: homelessness is a catastrophic event that can set children behind for years academically, let alone the mental health consequences of losing housing stability. In conclusion, I strongly support HB935, and hope that the legislature will be open to adding supplemental funding after it is established, to help alleviate and prevent economic hardship and trauma by having these emergency funds available without delay. Thank you.

Map showing food insecurity in Maryland before the pandemic: source: MD Dept. of Health and No Kid Hungry

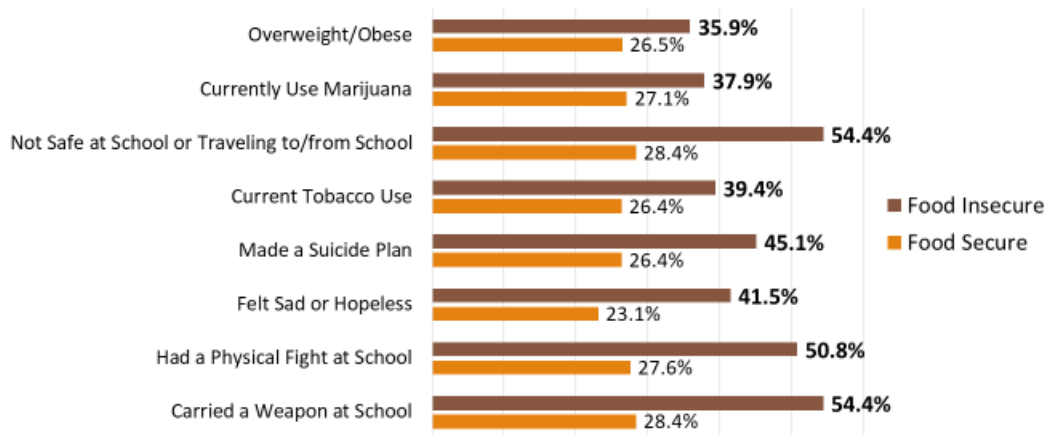
High School Student Food Insecurity by School District



Source: 2018 Maryland MS YRBS/YTS

Food insecurity, both in and out of emergency situations, creates major health disparities and emotional trauma for children:

Health Disparities for Baltimore County High School Students Who are Food Insecure



Responses to hunger and the need for essential supplies during the current crisis have been inadequate:

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/op-ed/bs-ed-op-1210-hunger-maryland-20201209-xn6dnlia3fcgkagwqk6m4rp7y-story.html>

“The \$10 million for food assistance statewide **recently announced** by the Hogan administration, even when combined with the \$4 million announced this spring, is only a quarter of what Baltimore County alone would need for a year. In addition, this \$14 million was not given directly to local governments to purchase food, but was given instead to food banks, providing little flexibility for spending in areas not necessarily being covered by food banks or pantries...

In contrast, according to announcements and news releases, the state of Maryland will spend at least \$500 million on businesses and economic recovery this year. There is no doubt that our businesses need help — **but a statewide total of \$14 million for food this year compared with \$500 million for economic recovery, is grossly unbalanced.**

We hope that Governor Hogan will communicate more pro-actively with local governments in Maryland — not only to provide more funding for food, but also to develop statewide plans for a consistent system of food distribution, which will be crucial if severe winter weather disrupts food distributions. The families waiting in line for hours for food at sites have no reserves, and if storms disrupt these distributions, they may have no food for days. And it is not just food that is lacking. Food assistance programs do not pay for soap, diapers, period products, and many other household items essential for

hygiene and mental well-being... This winter, we are on the verge of the worst humanitarian crisis perhaps since the Great Depression in terms of hunger, illness, and job loss. Let us hope that one day we will not look back on this time and wonder how the wealthiest state in the nation did not adequately provide for its own people during the pandemic. “

Students Experiencing Homelessness

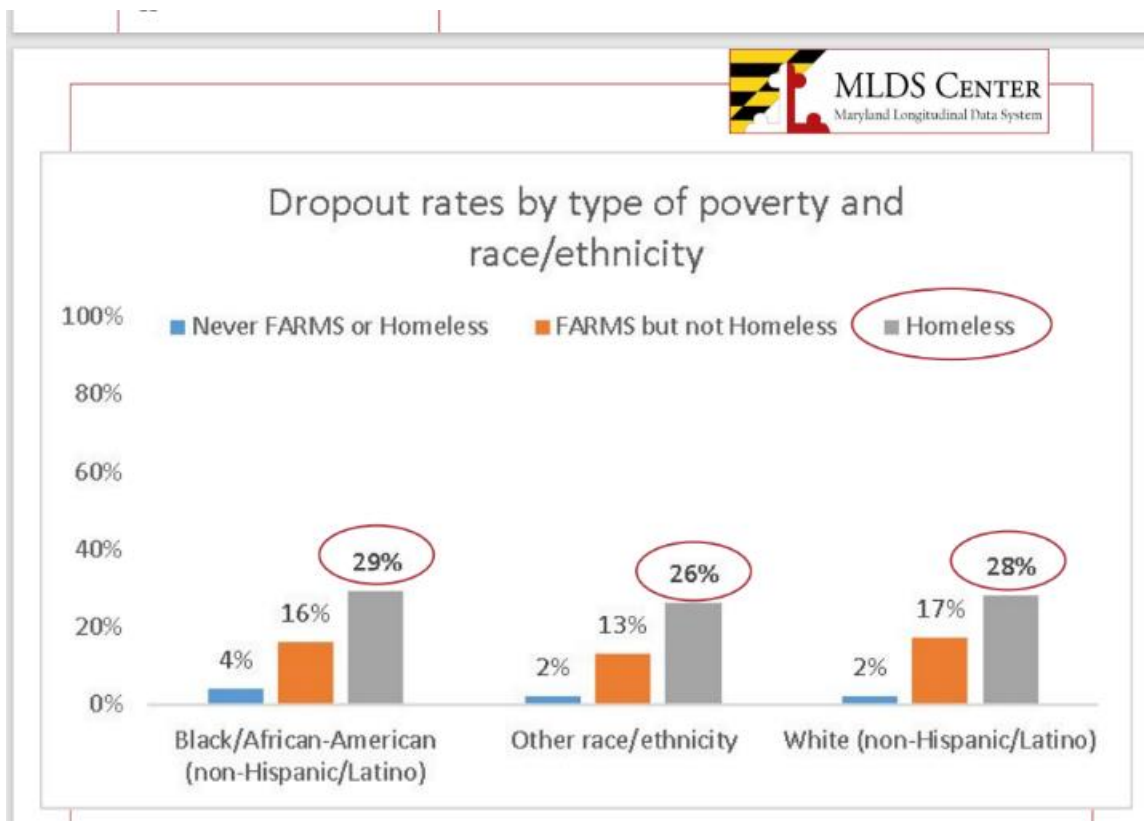
The effects of becoming homeless are so devastating on children that every effort must be taken during emergencies to prevent homelessness from disrupting family life.

Some effects:

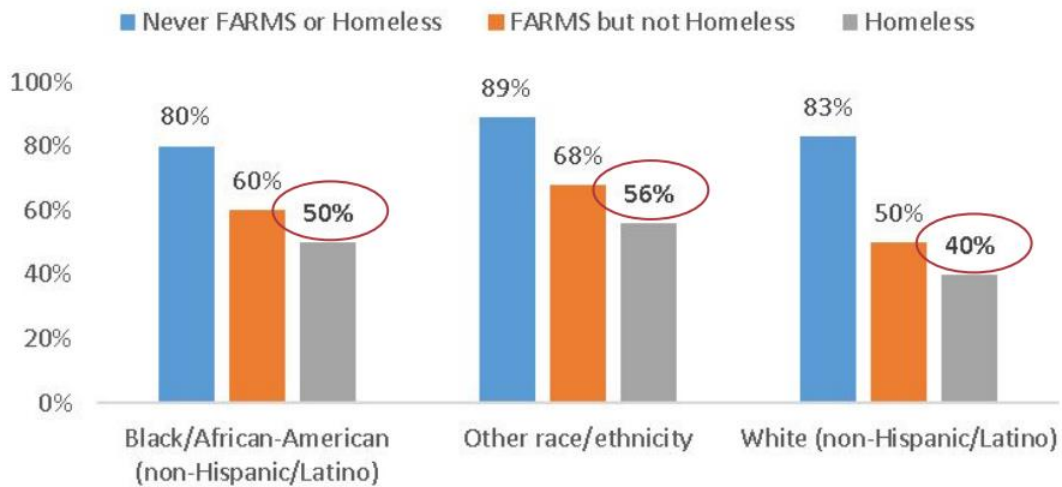
- **Adolescent homelessness leads to higher chances of dropping out of school and lower chances of enrolling in college**

Source, Bess A. Rose, “Adolescent Homelessness and Long-term Educational and Workforce Outcomes New Evidence from the Maryland Longitudinal Data System,” presented at Beyond Housing, Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness, NYC, January 2020

mldscenter.maryland.gov



College enrollment rates by type of poverty and race/ethnicity



Summary - academic effects

- Compared to a similar student who experienced poverty without homelessness, experiencing homelessness is estimated to:
 - Double a student's odds of dropping out of school
 - Decrease a student's odds of enrolling in college by about 30 percent

