



Maryland Alliance for
Racial Equity in Education

Testimony in FAVOR of HB0786

Department of Human Services, Maryland
Department of Health, and Department of
Education – Easing Access to Family Support
Programs
Appropriations Committee

February 9, 2021

Dear Honorable Chair McIntosh and Members of
the Appropriations Committee:

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in
Education (MAREE) is pleased to provide favorable
testimony for House Bill 0786, Department of
Human Services, Maryland Department of Health,
and Department of Education – Easing Access to
Family Support Programs. MAREE is a coalition of
education advocacy, civil rights, and community-
based organizations committed to eliminating
racial disparities in Maryland's education system.
Our coalition is in favor of establishing policy of
the State to do everything possible to alleviate
administrative hurdles for low-income families
seeking to access to support programs; requiring

that the Department of Human Services, the Maryland Department of Health, and the State Department of Education to take certain steps to achieve the policy goal and to simplify the application process for family support programs.

Such efforts will ensure that State agencies are working with one another and an integration of state online systems. This policy will decrease anxiety, stress, worry and time away from work for families and individuals. Often seeking support from the state requires a full day to several days off from work traveling from one place to another, filling out numerous lengthy forms and lost wages. Additionally, the process is tiresome, confusing, and frightening. Children are taken out of school to go with their parent/family member to provide childcare to younger siblings and or serve as translator for family member. Some families do not apply for services they may be eligible because they do not know about the service or from fatigue and frustration. HB0786 will simplify application processes, which will result in a reduction in the number of application questions to the fewest necessary to determine qualifications, improve access to applications, simplify application language, the possibility of creating a single universal application for all family support programs, the possibility of establishing a universal verification process that can be used by each of the family support programs and automatically enrolling

an individual or family who qualifies for one family support program in all other family support programs for which the individual or family qualifies.

Children living in poverty are two to three times more likely to be chronically absent—and face the most harm because their community lacks the resources to make up for the lost learning in school. Students from communities of color as well as those with disabilities are disproportionately affected. Often absences are tied to health problems, such as asthma, diabetes, and oral and mental health issues. Other barriers including food and housing insecurity make it difficult to go to school every day. When Marylanders have adequate health coverage, provisions for housing and food stress, worry, and anxiety decline.

For these reasons, MAREE strongly urges a favorable report on HB0786.