

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 786**COMMITTEE:** Appropriations**BILL TITLE:** Department of Human Services, Maryland Department of Health, and Department of Education - Easing Access to Family Support Programs**DHS POSITION:** Letter of Information

The Department of Human Services (DHS) respectfully offers this letter of information regarding House Bill 786 (HB786). HB786 would establish state policy of interagency efforts to alleviate administrative hurdles for low-income families seeking access to support programs. This legislation will require DHS to collaborate with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in this effort while simplifying the application process for certain programs.

Last year, the legislature created the Two-Generation Family Economic Security Commission to examine and make recommendations to existing statewide policy and programming for low-income families. The parties named in this bill are all seated on this Commission and will produce a report to the legislature later this year. Prior to that, DHS has been advancing a Two-Generation approach to serving families that equally weighs the outcomes of parents and children. Cross-departmental efforts to create new programs or update existing services are viewed through this lens.

In 2017, DHS began development on Maryland's Total Human-services Integrated Network (MD THINK). This innovative, cloud-based program will allow Maryland agencies to share and manage data in one convenient place. MD THINK provides an integrated solution for eligibility determination, financial management, and resource management that easily shares data. MD THINK is providing hosting services for MDH applications, such as eMedicaid and the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (HBX). Updates on the status and development of MD THINK have been required bi-monthly through the 2020 Joint Chairmen's Report, as well as previous years' Reports.

This legislation would require a separate, siloed effort between DHS, MDH, and MSDE to develop a single, universal application for all family support services. HB786 as written shall have a two-time proposed fiscal impact of \$3.5M - \$5.0M each for FY 2021 & FY 2022 for the design, development, integration and implementation of functionalities and applications to develop a single, universal application for all family support services. Family support services applications must align with federal regulation and reporting requirements for respective agencies. MDH partners with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. DHS partners with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. This would create an administrative burden on the State agencies where development of MD THINK seeks to gather services and applications onto one platform and share information across programs based on regulations and program policies. In addition, an annual maintenance and operational cost of \$3M for subsequent years thereafter of which 100% is general funds.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to share the aforementioned information regarding HB 786 and respectfully requests that this information be considered during the Committee's deliberations.

