

March 2, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in full support of Senate Bill 868, the Suzanne Jones Act. As the President and CEO of the Washington County Community Action Council, it is my responsibility to ensure our agency is serving the residents of Washington County that are striving for self-sufficiency. We serve 10,000 clients each year in a variety of programs including energy assistance, eviction prevention, housing counseling, mediation, food pantry and transportation to mention a few. We are 95% grant funded from federal, state and local governments. All of these grants have very specific requirements to assist only Washington County residents and further they have a minimum of a 30-day residency requirement.

Individuals that are released into our community from other counties in Maryland where they committed the crime attempt to get services from CAC. They are denied until they can meet the grant requirements. Frequently these newly released individuals tell staff they have no plan and need help with housing and food, however have no employment or plan for self-sufficiency, which conflicts with our mission. We give our clients a hand up and not a hand out. As a result, too frequently these former inmates regress to committing crimes in our community.

CAC has limited resources that we use to help productive low-income members of our community when they experience a life event such as a medical bill, loss of a job or other unanticipated event that affects their family budget. We cannot and will not provide services to individuals as they are released into our county because they do not meet the minimum qualifications for the grants.

It is critical for our community that Senate Bill 868 is passed. CAC does not have the resources to assist individuals who were not originally residents of Washington County.

Respectfully submitted

