



**Testimony in Support of HB143
Child Tax Credit
January 12, 2021**

TO: The Honorable Anne Kaiser, Chair, Alonzo Washington, Vice Chair, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Tiffany Jones, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board strongly supports HB143, to create a state Child Tax Credit to benefit families that are excluded from the federal Child Tax Credit; a taxpayer with one or more dependent children that are age 0 to 5 or age 0-16 with a physical, intellectual, developmental, or emotional disability would qualify for the tax credit. This includes immigrants whose children who do not have a valid Social Security number. This bill fills a critical gap for very low-income families who do qualify for the federal Child Tax Credit. The \$500 credit for each child who is under the age of six or under the age of seventeen and disabled, would make a substantial impact for these vulnerable families.

As the governing body for the Montgomery County Community Action Agency, the county's designated antipoverty entity, we know from the agency's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program that Child Tax Credits, along with Earned Income (EITC) and other tax credits, are some of the most effective anti-poverty tools available. Last year, the agency's VITA program helped County residents receive nearly \$700,000 in Child Tax Credits, money that may be used to pay down debts, put money into savings, and pay for necessities.

Since the pandemic, many low-wage workers who were already struggling have lost wages—many are underemployed, and/or may have also been unemployed for part of the year, so the credit is more valuable than ever in helping people to make ends meet. Here in Montgomery County, the cost of living is so high that it can be very difficult for families to become self-sufficient. 38% of households with a child under the age of six have incomes below the Self-Sufficiency Standard.¹ Families in this portion of the population with the lowest incomes would directly benefit from this bill. The \$500 Child Tax Credit would help to offset the high cost of necessities such as childcare and housing. In Montgomery County, the average cost of infant care is \$17,713² and outstanding 90% of households with an annual income of less than \$20,000 are housing burdened³. Tax credits provide critical financial support to families who are struggling the most.

This bill has the additional benefit of helping very low-income families who are not receiving the added support of the EITC. Taxpayers who are not citizens are not eligible for the EITC, but they are eligible for the federal Child Tax Credit if their children are citizens. Unfortunately, the very lowest-income

¹ <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/maryland>

² <http://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Montgomery.pdf>

³ <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>

taxpayers who are not citizens miss out on both the EITC and the federal Child Tax Credit. Ensuring that these households receive the Child Tax Credit is critically important in diverse areas where a large number of immigrants reside, many of whom are mixed legal status households.

We strongly encourage you to pass HB143 and to continue to support tax credits and other policies that help Marylanders move towards self-sufficiency.