



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 828

Family Investment Program – Eligibility, Work Experience, Community Service, and Reports – Alterations
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Submitted by Julia Gross and Kali Schumitz, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

211 Maryland

Baltimore Jewish Council

Behavioral Health System Baltimore

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Energy Advocates

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Family League of Baltimore

Fuel Fund of Maryland

Job Opportunities Task Force

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,
Inc.

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Loyola University Maryland

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Community Action
Partnership

Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Paul's Place

St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore

Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

Julia Gross, Co-Chair

P: 410-528-0021 ext 6029

E: jgross@mdhungersolutions.org

Kali Schumitz, Co-Chair

P: 410-412- 9105 ext 701

E: kschumitz@mdeconomy.org

The Maryland Alliance for the Poor (MAP) strongly supports SB 828, which would make the work participation portions of Maryland's Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program more equitable, effective, and responsive to individual family needs.

TCA is Maryland's cash assistance program that funded in large part by the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant. TCA is available to low income or no income families. Adult members of the household are required to participate in work activities each week. Our TCA program is not living up to the promises of the mid-1990's – it is not leading recipients to work and increased wages. **Five years after leaving TCA 68% of former recipients live in deep poverty (less than 50% of the poverty line)**, which is less than \$9,155 per year for a family of two.

While the TANF block grant provides states with significant flexibility to design their welfare programs, it does tie funding to a state achieving a target work participation rate. These work participation requirements are deeply rooted in our country's history of racist ideas and policies, and this reduces the effectiveness of this program for all TCA participants, regardless of race.

SB 828 would:

- End Maryland's overuse of unpaid "work experience" programs. These programs require people to work 90-day assignments for no pay and rarely lead to employment or meaningful skill development. Maryland places people in "work experience" programs at a much higher rate than any other state.
- Allow all parents under 1 to be exempt from work when needing to care for an infant, in line with what is allowed under federal law.
- Adopt the federal 30-hour minimum work week (20 hours for single parents with a child under 6). Maryland currently uses a 40-hour work week as the standard minimum work week, which limits flexibility for parents caring for children.
- Give families the choice of exemption from work for first 12-months on TCA. Federal law allows states flexibility to exempt families for the first 24 months on TCA. While Maryland has a list of specific exemptions from the work requirement, it is not allowing the full flexibility allowed within the federal framework.

SB 828 recognizes that parents have a wide range of personal experiences, history in the workforce, and family structures that are ill-served by a one-size-fits all work program. It would better support families and put more Marylanders on a path toward economic security.

MAP appreciates your consideration, and strongly urges a favorable report with amendments on SB 828.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.