



**Testimony Concerning SB 828 “Family Investment Program – Eligibility, Work Experience, Community Service, and Reports – Alterations”
Submitted to the House Appropriations Committee
March 10, 2022**

Position: **SUPPORT**

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports SB 828 which would add federally allowable flexibilities to the Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program and re-envision the Work Experience Program so that TCA recipients have greater access to family-supporting employment opportunities.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability and quality of child care and other supports for children and families in Maryland. We have been active in state and federal debates on welfare reform and are strongly committed to ensuring that low- and moderate-income families -- and indeed, all families -- have the supports they need to care for their children and to be economically self-sufficient.

While TCA is a critical safety net for those living in the deepest levels of poverty, it is not a pathway to economic stability for the vast majority of recipients. In order to receive TCA, able-bodied adults in the household are required to participate in federally defined work activities. Although the original intent for the work requirement might have been for recipients to obtain employment after a short spell of receiving benefits, numerous studies show the workforce component of cash assistance does not result in long-term, stable employment. In fact, data from the Life After Welfare report shows that five years after receiving TCA, 80% of Maryland families still live in poverty and, most disturbingly, almost 68% of former recipients are living in deep poverty.

SB 828 codifies that families can be exempt from the work requirement for the first 12 months while on TCA, and can be exempt when needed to care for a newborn under 12 months. These flexibilities are trauma-informed practices, allowing families time to stabilize after a new baby or a major life crisis before transitioning into work programs.

A re-envisioning of the Work Experience Program could promote family economic stability and provide additional income for children, who will benefit greatly from it. For this reason, MFN urges your favorable consideration of SB 828.