

SB26 - Auto-enroll SNAP recipients into Medicaid T

Uploaded by: Abigail Snyder

Position: FAV

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Baltimore District

Written Testimony

Senate Bill 26 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Finance Committee – February 2, 2023

Support

Background: Senate Bill 26 would automatically grant Medicaid eligibility to children and adults enrolled in SNAP.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all of its agencies. This includes Jewish Community Services (JCS), which provides social services to low-income Marylanders.

Maryland has one of the highest rates of deep poverty in the country, with almost 50% of those living in poverty being considered as living in deep poverty. Based on 2021 data from the Census Bureau, this legislation would help over 60,000 uninsured Marylanders get the health coverage they need, including 23,000 Black Marylanders and 28,000 Latinos.

Other states have already adopted programs like the one proposed in SB26. In fact, more than 30,000 uninsured children in [Louisiana](#) and 90,000 uninsured children in [South Carolina](#) have been enrolled in Medicaid based on SNAP receipt, without needing to complete paperwork.

In short, this legislation would dramatically reduce the number of uninsured Marylanders while improving health equity. **For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Councils asks for a favorable report on SB26.**

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

SB 26_Medicaid SNAP Enrollment_Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Allison Taylor

Position: FAV



Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Mid-Atlantic States, Inc
2101 East Jefferson Street
Rockville, Maryland 20852

February 2, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith
Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 26 – Support

Dear Chair Griffith and Members of the Committee:

Kaiser Permanente is pleased to support SB 26, “Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment.”

Kaiser Permanente is the largest private integrated health care delivery system in the United States, delivering health care to over 12 million members in eight states and the District of Columbia.¹ Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic States, which operates in Maryland, provides and coordinates complete health care services for over 825,000 members. In Maryland, we deliver care to approximately 475,000 members.

KP appreciates the Committee’s long-standing commitment to reducing the state’s uninsured rate, and this bill is another step in that direction. SB 26 would establish an Express Lane Eligibility Program to enroll individuals in Medicaid based on their eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Many low-income Marylanders who receive SNAP benefits are also eligible for Medicaid but may not be enrolled. To that end, we urge a favorable report for SB 26.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact me at Allison.W.Taylor@kp.org or (202) 924-7496 with questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allison Taylor".

Allison Taylor
Director of Government Relations
Kaiser Permanente

¹ Kaiser Permanente comprises Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc., the nation’s largest not-for-profit health plan, and its health plan subsidiaries outside California and Hawaii; the not-for-profit Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, which operates 39 hospitals and over 650 other clinical facilities; and the Permanente Medical Groups, self-governed physician group practices that exclusively contract with Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and its health plan subsidiaries to meet the health needs of Kaiser Permanente’s members.

SB 26 - Maryland Food Bank - SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Anne Wallerstedt

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 26

Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment Senate Finance Committee February 2, 2023

SUPPORT

Senate Bill 26 allows for direct certification and enrollment in public benefit programs, specifically the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Maryland Children’s Health Program based on SNAP eligibility, SNAP enrollment based on SSI eligibility, and utility assistance based on SNAP, TANF, SSI, or VA benefits. It also increases the income limit for energy assistance.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that 1 in 3 Marylanders are at risk of facing food insecurity. Food insecurity means a lack of consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day. Some communities and populations are at a higher risk of food insecurity, including communities of color, older adults, and families with children. There are food insecure Marylanders in every corner of the state.

Public benefit programs are an absolutely essential means for low-income Marylanders to support their families. The Maryland Food Bank alone processed and submitted over 1,100 SNAP applications in FY 22 through our SNAP Outreach Program, and while that is a sliver of the total applications processed across the state, we can attribute almost 1 million meals to our efforts. With the pandemic-era SNAP Emergency Allotments ending, we are bracing for an increase – potentially significantly – in calls for food assistance. Capturing Marylanders who qualify for benefits such as SNAP but might not yet be enrolled will be crucial to easing this burden not only on the Food Bank and our network of community partners but on the most vulnerable of our neighbors who are food-insecure.

Marylanders who live at or below the Federal Poverty Line and qualify for assistance benefit programs are already at risk of economic and financial instability. Those who are food-insecure specifically are rarely hungry in a vacuum and generally have other needs, such as affordable housing or accessible medical care. Ensuring those Marylanders can access the social safety net programs they need and deserve are critical for supporting their families and eventual economic mobility.

For these reasons, the Maryland Food Bank respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 26.

SB26 - Johns Hopkins - Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Annie Coble

Position: FAV

TO: Melony Griffith, Chair
Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Annie Coble
Assistant Director, State Affairs

DATE: February 2, 2023

RE: SB26 Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs - Eligibility and Enrollment

Johns Hopkins **supports SB26: Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs - Eligibility and Enrollment.** This bill requires the Maryland Department of Health to establish an Express Lane Eligibility program to enroll individuals in Medicaid and/or CHIP who are also enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

As one of the largest health care providers in the State, Johns Hopkins whole heartedly supports any efforts to make health insurance more accessible. Johns Hopkins serves thousands of Medicaid recipients every year and we recognize significant benefits from the creation of the “Maryland Easy Enrollment Health Insurance Program” in 2019. This program allows Marylanders to enroll in health insurance, including Medicaid, while filing tax-returns. Streamlining the enrollment process allowed nearly 250,000 Marylanders to enroll in health insurance the first year of the program.

Johns Hopkins appreciates the importance of making enrollment in health insurance, and Medicaid in particular, more seamless for Marylanders. On our part, the Johns Hopkins Health System employs financial counselors who are responsible for, amongst other things, assisting patients with enrollment in Medicaid. Additionally, at the Johns Hopkins Hospital and Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, we pay the salary of a Department of Social Services worker to be onsite to help people enroll in public benefits.

We understand how beneficial it is to our patients to have access to such a resource. Medicaid recipients are some of the most vulnerable people in the State, as are those that participate in SNAP, and Johns Hopkins is committed to doing everything we can to support these individuals and help to ensure they have the resources they need to be healthy and safe. Streamlining Medicaid enrollment for SNAP recipients is an easy and reasonable tool to do just that.

Accordingly, Johns Hopkins respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on **SB26**.

SB26 - Johns Hopkins - Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Annie Coble

Position: FAV

TO: Melony Griffith, Chair
Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Annie Coble
Assistant Director, State Affairs

DATE: February 2, 2023

RE: SB26 Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs - Eligibility and Enrollment

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Accordingly, Johns Hopkins respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on **SB26**.

NKH MD_MD SB 26_Statement of Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Ayesha Holmes

Position: FAV



MARYLAND

February 1, 2023

Maryland State Legislature
Senate Finance Committee

Re: Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Madam Chair and members of the committee,

No Kid Hungry Maryland writes in support of SB 26 which will streamline access to benefits based on already-verified eligibility information which is a critical step in reducing the administrative burden on individuals and the state.

Through the No Kid Hungry Maryland campaign, we work with partners, lawmakers, educators, and businesses to identify and eliminate the barriers that may prevent children and families from accessing healthy and nutritious meals. Approximately, 1 in 8 children in Maryland could face hunger this year, and programs like SNAP and school meals play a critical role in reducing food insecurity for children and Maryland families.

The policy outlined in SB 26 is proven and effective. Using technology and enrollment data across programs is cost saving, improves efficiency, and removes barriers for families tasked to provide very detailed personal financial and household information several times for multiple programs. The Express Lane Eligibility Program is evidence-based, would reduce Maryland's administrative costs of public benefit programs, and is a proven concept already in use in other states, such as South Carolina and Louisiana.

Implementing an Express Lane Eligibility Program for Medicaid based on SNAP income data is a smart decision especially in anticipation of the unwinding of Medicaid when the Public Health Emergency ends. Additionally, enrolling SSI recipients into SNAP based on their income information removes another burden on applicant and case workers determining eligibility. Low-income families and children would also benefit from the information sharing between SNAP, TANF, SSI, and VA benefits for express lane enrollment in fuel and utility assistance programs.

Again, we strongly support SB 26, which would streamline eligibility determinations by data sharing, increase retention of those eligible for public benefit programs, and has the potential to save Maryland social service agencies millions of dollars. .

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. Should you have any questions, or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 410-205-1016 or at aholmes@strength.org.

Sincerely,

Ayesha B. Holmes
Director
No Kid Hungry Maryland

SB26 on lh.pdf

Uploaded by: Cindy Carter

Position: FAV



Cancer Support Foundation, Inc.
8268 Academy Road
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Phone: 410.964.9563
Email: info@cancersupportfoundation.org

www.cancersupportfoundation.org

Finance Committee

SB 26

Support

February 2, 2023

Cindy Carter
Cancer Support Foundation, Inc

Good afternoon, Chair Griffith and Committee,

I am Cindy Carter Co-Founder of the Critical Medical Needs Program and Executive Director of Cancer Support Foundation. I am speaking in favor of SB26.

For 18 years now I have been working with the state agencies that provide grants for services. We have been working with some of the most vulnerable residents in the state.

Our clients are rarely in need of just one service, but usually require many such as food, medical assistance or energy assistance to name just three. To get the help they need they are required to work with multiple agencies each having their own application. The applications ask for the same basic information require working with one poor customer service experience after another.

So, to get the services they require they need to find where to go, understand the application and successfully get through the process. Each one of these journeys have the client work with different agencies who lack customer service leaving the customer on their own and have pretty much created a closed door to getting the services.



Cancer Support Foundation, Inc.
8268-Academy Road
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Phone: 410.964.9563
Email: info@cancersupportfoundation.org

www.cancersupportfoundation.org

To compound a bad situation, rarely are our clients even referred to other grants like the Energy Assistance. All of these grants have been operated in silos and clients are unable to get through each system to get another service.

Some of our clients have been able to get food stamps, since there are groups that are working with families to get them into food stamps. They are not even told about the Energy Assistance grant or have tried themselves and not been successful in getting through the process. Only about 23% of the total number of eligible residents are able to get into the Energy Assistance Program in Maryland.

The system does not work well and has not for all the years I have been working with them. Our clients are fighting for their lives and do not have the energy to yet try to get through another closed door to services that they need to survive. Try doing the online application or call an office for assistance and you will understand why the denial rate is so high for this grant

The four areas of assistance that this bill lists as pathways into Energy Assistance just make common sense. As a former accountant I can only imagine the administrative costs savings of this data sharing to issue multiple grants that the client is eligible for and in great need of to survive.

I have been down here for many years now about the issues with getting Energy Assistance Grants. The situation is not better. This law seems to be a very effective solution that respects the need for proper documentation and verification of the client's situation.

I am asking for a favorable report on SB 26 to provide categorical eligibility for Energy Assistance Grants.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cindy Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cindy Carter
Executive Director
Cancer Support Foundation, Inc.

SB 26 Supp to Fin - MD Medical Assistance Program

Uploaded by: Henry Bogdan

Position: FAV

February 2, 2023

Testimony on Senate Bill 26
Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment
Senate Finance Committee

Position: Favorable

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of more than 1500 nonprofit organizations and institutions. We strongly urge you to support Senate Bill 26 that would automatically grant Medicaid eligibility to children and adults enrolled in Maryland’s Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (“SNAP”).

Based on [Census Bureau data for 2021](#), this would help over 60,000 uninsured Marylanders to get the health coverage they need, including 23,000 Black Marylanders and 28,000 Latinos. Senate Bill 26 can dramatically reduce the levels of uninsured in Maryland while at the same time improving health equity and outcomes across the state.

In addition, this legislation would eliminate paperwork currently required for over half a million SNAP recipients in Maryland to renew their Medicaid benefits, creating administrative savings for Maryland.

Senate Bill 26 would also improve other social determinants of health by streamlining utility assistance enrollment, expanding access to electric assistance, and automatically enrolling seniors into SNAP if they qualify for Supplemental Security Income.

For all these reasons we urge you to give Senate Bill 26 [a favorable report](#).



SB 26.pdf

Uploaded by: Hindley Williams

Position: FAV



SB26 –Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

SUPPORT

Testimony of Maryland Centers for Independent Living

Senate Finance Committee, February 2, 2023

The seven Centers for Independent Living (CIL) were established by federal law and work to ensure the civil rights and quality services of people with disabilities in Maryland. Centers for Independent Living are nonprofit disability resource and advocacy organizations located throughout Maryland operated by and for people with disabilities. CIL staff and Boards are at least 51% people with disabilities. We are part of a nationwide network providing the following core services: Information and Referral; Advocacy; Peer Support; Independent Living Skills training and Transition Services.

This bill would automatically grant Medicaid eligibility to children and adults enrolled in SNAP. The staff of Centers for Independent Living support hundreds of people with disabilities around the state to apply for SNAP, it would increase the efficiency greatly if this application also enrolled individuals in Medicaid. The individuals we support are often dissuaded from applying for public assistance or insurance because of the amount of paperwork and documentation needed. To be able to reduce that would significantly reduce the levels of uninsured in Maryland while at the same time improving health equity.

This legislation would also eliminate paperwork currently required for over half a million SNAP recipients in Maryland to renew their Medicaid benefits, creating administrative savings for Maryland. This would be extremely beneficial for individuals with disabilities in Maryland, renewals can be missed and then it is time consuming to reestablish.

This legislation will benefit individuals with disabilities greatly in accessing SNAP and Medicaid in a far more streamlined way.

Contact Information:

Sarah Basehart

Independence Now

240-898-2183

sbasehart@innow.org

Hindley Williams

The IMAGE Center

410-305-9199
hwilliams@imagemd.org

SB 26 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryl

Uploaded by: Jake Whitaker

Position: FAV



Maryland
Hospital Association

Senate Bill 26 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Position: *Support*
February 2, 2023
Senate Finance Committee

MHA Position

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 26. Broad based and comprehensive health coverage, including increased access to the state's Medical Assistance Program, is integral to hospitals' ability to deliver high-quality care.

SB 26 would automatically grant eligibility for and expedite enrollment in the Medical Assistance Program for children and adults enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Census Bureau data for 2021 show this bill would help over 60,000 uninsured Marylanders get the health coverage they need and significantly reduce the number of uninsured Marylanders while simultaneously improving health equity. This legislation would also eliminate the administrative work required for over half a million SNAP recipients in Maryland to renew their Medicaid benefits, creating savings for the state.

In addition, this bill would improve other social determinants of health by streamlining utility assistance enrollment, expanding access to electric assistance, and automatically enrolling seniors in SNAP if they qualify for Supplemental Security Income. SB 26 would ease barriers for eligible Marylanders to enroll in support programs and help them achieve optimal health.

This legislation also supports the aims of Maryland's unique Total Cost of Care Model. Under the Model, Maryland hospitals strive to lower costs and improve population health. In addition to treating illness and injury, hospitals reach beyond their four walls to keep people well and improve the health of the communities they serve. The result: hospitals are taking care of the whole person, empowering patients and families, coordinating care among different providers, and addressing social factors that influence people's health.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on SB 26.

For more information, please contact:
Jake Whitaker, Director, Government Affairs
Jwhitaker@mhaonline.org

SB26 - FAV - MD Hunger Solutions.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: JD Robinson

Position: FAV



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

**Testimony in Support of SB 26
Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and
Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment
Senate Finance Committee
February 2, 2023**

Dear Chair Griffith, Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee.

My name is JD Robinson. I am the Program Coordinator for SNAP of Maryland Hunger Solutions, a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to end hunger in Maryland by improving participation in the federal nutrition programs. Maryland Hunger Solutions strongly supports Senate Bill 26 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment.

This bill has several key provisions, including: automatically granting Medicaid eligibility to children and adults enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); eliminating the paperwork currently required for SNAP recipients in Maryland to renew their Medicaid benefits; automatically enrolling seniors into SNAP if they qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI); streamlining utility assistance enrollment; and expanding access to electricity assistance for low-income families.

Based on [Census Bureau data for 2021](#), automatically granting Medicaid eligibility to SNAP recipients would help over 60,000 uninsured Marylanders get the health coverage they need, including 23,000 Black Marylanders and 28,000 Latinos. In this way, the bill would not only dramatically reduce the number of Maryland residents without healthcare coverage but also advance health equity. Likewise, eliminating the Medicaid re-enrollment requirement for SNAP recipients (which would impact over half a million Maryland residents) and automatically enrolling seniors qualified for SSI in SNAP would reduce the time burden associated with filling out multiple applications, increase access to Medicaid and SNAP, and generate administrative cost savings for state.

Our on-the-ground experience as an authorized SNAP outreach agency for the state of Maryland has given us a unique perspective on this issue. The increased demand for additional assistance programs such as energy and healthcare is reflected in the number of callers on our toll-free hotline requesting referrals or information for these programs. Of the 400-500 calls we field per month, nearly a quarter ask for information on energy, heat, or medical assistance. We believe that providing streamlined pathways to these programs will improve the health and nutrition of thousands of Marylanders.

In conclusion, we urge a favorable report for SB 26. Thank you for your time.

WDC 2023 Testimony SB0026_Final.pdf

Uploaded by: JoAnne Koravos

Position: FAV



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

**Senate Bill 26 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program,
and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment
Senate Finance Committee – February 2, 2023
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2023 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic clubs in our county with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of SB0026. Marylanders who are eligible for safety-net services currently must complete multiple applications annually, including an annual renewal, which are reviewed by different agencies. Because of this complicated, inefficient paperwork system many Marylanders are not receiving or renewing Medicaid and other safety-net benefits. As an example, similar documents are needed for Medicaid enrollment and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Based on [Census Bureau data](#) for 2021, 65,000 Maryland residents who receive SNAP are uninsured - nearly one in five uninsured Marylanders. These residents would automatically be enrolled in Medicaid if this bill were enacted. Streamlining and creating one eligibility process would allow additional families to be served with little to no administrative cost increases and would prevent families from losing benefits due to needless, duplicative paperwork requirements.

Specifically, this bill would:

- Implement Express Lane Eligibility to automatically grant Medicaid eligibility to children and adults whom SNAP has already found to have very low income.
- Streamline the process for receiving help by automatically enrolling someone for utility assistance if they qualify for SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), SSI, or means-tested veteran's benefits.
- Support seniors by automatically enrolling them for SNAP if they qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- Increase the EUSP eligibility income limit to 200% FPL (Federal Poverty Level), matching other basic assistance programs offered by the Department of Human Services for low-income families.

Passage of this bill would be of particular benefit to women and children who are at greatest risk of living in poverty. Streamlining safety-net services will help Maryland families cover their needs and will ensure they don't miss out on important services.

We ask for your support for SB0026 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Diana E. Conway
WDC President

Margaret Hadley
WDC Advocacy Committee

HFAM Testimony SB 26.pdf

Uploaded by: Joseph DeMattos

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Senate Bill 26: Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

February 2, 2023

Written Testimony Only

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to express our support for Senate Bill 26.

HFAM represents skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers. Our skilled nursing members provide the majority of long-term and post-acute care to Marylanders in need and can be found in nearly every jurisdiction of the state.

Senate Bill 26 requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to establish an Express Lane Eligibility Program by January 1, 2025 and to enroll individuals, based on certain eligibility. Specifically, under this legislation, MDH will establish a fast-track eligibility lane to ensure that Medicaid-qualified individuals and families in Maryland have expeditious access to much-needed services related to healthcare and nutrition, with a focus on providing restaurant and heat-and-go meals to Marylanders most in need. The Department will coordinate the proposed policies of this legislation with counties, pay the costs of such county coordination, and file for federal waivers to establish such an Express Lane Eligibility Program to the extent that a waiver is needed.

According to Feeding America, 100 percent of U.S. counties have some level of food insecurity. Such food insecurity is experienced by many different racial and ethnic groups, and by every age cohort. Sadly, children are most often the victims of food insecurity.

In my personal experience, before the pandemic, it was common for families with loved ones in a skilled nursing and rehabilitation center to eat meals in the center as part of free or discounted meal programs. Unfortunately, in many cases, those programs are less prevalent in our setting due to infectious disease prevention protocols.

People are healthier and children learn better when they have consistent access to healthcare and food. Maryland has the financial resources to take this important step forward, and such a proactive approach will likely lower healthcare and public assistance costs in future years.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report from the Committee on Senate Bill 26.

Submitted by:

Joseph DeMattos, Jr.
President and CEO
(410) 290-5132

SB 26_MD Center on Economic Policy_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Kali Schumitz

Position: FAV



FEBRUARY 2, 2023

Streamlining the Application Process for Safety Net Programs Will Increase Participation and Benefit More Eligible Marylanders

Position Statement Supporting Senate Bill 26

Submitted to the Senate Finance Committee

Thousands of low-income Marylanders rely on safety net programs to meet their health, food, energy and basic needs. Their ability to apply for and receive these benefits is not only beneficial to them personally but also to Maryland's economy. However, many Marylanders do not receive the benefits of these effective anti-poverty tools even if they are eligible. **The Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports Senate Bill 26 because it will ultimately ensure more eligible Marylanders receive the benefits they need.**

Maryland families eligible for social safety programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Cash Assistance (TAC), Medicaid, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), have to fill out multiple applications annually across different agencies to obtain benefits. This can be a tedious and burdensome process often resulting in loss of qualified benefits or inability to renew. This duplicative and complicated process means that often qualified beneficiaries of these social safety programs are failing to apply for, or renew Medicaid or energy assistance benefits¹.

SB 26 will create an Express Lane Eligibility that will automatically grant Medicaid eligibility to children and adults whom SNAP has already found to be low-income. It will automatically enroll Marylanders who qualify for SNAP, TAC, SSI, or means-tested utility assistance for veterans, and support seniors by automatically enrolling them for SNAP if they qualify for SSI. This bill will also increase the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) eligibility income limit from 175% to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, matching other basic assistance programs offered by the Department of Human Services for low-income families.

It is important to ensure all eligible Marylanders receive the safety net benefits they need because they can have a significant impact on people's lives. Of the 30 percent share of income that households spend on housing, 20 percent is spent on energy costs alone.² Receiving energy assistance can often determine if a family maintains housing, has enough to eat or even remains healthy. This is why it is important that families who qualify are able to apply and that the process is simple and not lengthy or cumbersome.

In Maryland, households at 175% of the federal poverty level – with income below \$38,000 for a family of three, for example – spent an average of 14% of their income on energy costs, but with the help of Maryland

Commented [K1]: Edited to provide context and reduce jargon. I used 2020 FPL since the data is from 2020.

Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) and EUSP benefits their net energy burden (the percent of income spent on energy costs) fell to 9% during 2020. For households up to 200 percent of the poverty level, the average gross energy burden was 12%, while households between 176% and 200% of the FPL had an energy burden of 7%.

Thousands of Maryland's low-income children also remain uninsured even though they qualify for Medicaid and CHIP. Adopting Express Lane Eligibility will increase healthcare access for eligible children by expediting and simplifying the application process by relying on findings from other eligibility determinations. ELE has also proven to reduce administrative burdens and increase savings to the agencies that administer the programs.³

At a time of high inflation and energy costs, low-income Marylanders need support in order to meet their needs and care for those who depend on them. Ensuring that the application process for safety net benefits is smooth and less complicated would guarantee that most qualified Marylanders do not miss out on these resources.

For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully requests that the Finance Committee make a favorable report on Senate Bill 26.

Equity Impact Analysis: Senate Bill 26

Bill summary

Senate Bill 26 ensures that more Marylanders who qualify for safety net programs – such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and energy assistance programs – do not miss out on them or lose them by streamlining the process by which people sign up for assistance. It will also establish categorical eligibility, which means one application process will allow an individual to enroll in all services for which they are eligible.

Background

Currently, Marylanders who are eligible for safety net services have to constantly complete and renew multiple applications which are reviewed by different agencies. This is a duplicative, lengthy and burdensome process for both the applicant and State agencies. As a result, many Marylanders are not receiving or not renewing Medicaid or energy assistance benefits. A majority of the documents needed to verify energy assistance income-eligibility are also collected for SNAP or Temporary Cash Assistance. Yet 30,000 SNAP households who claim a heating or cooling expense do not receive Energy Assistance. Similar documents are needed for Medicaid enrollment. Based on Census Bureau data for 2021, 65,000 uninsured state residents receive SNAP—nearly one in five uninsured Marylanders (17%)⁴.

Equity Implications

- Black and Latinx households are far more likely than white households to earn poverty-level wages and are therefore more likely to qualify for safety-net benefits. While state and federal safety-net benefits serve a larger number of white households than households in any other racial or ethnic group, they serve a larger proportion of people of color.

- Social safety nets also have a disproportionate positive impact in reducing poverty rates among households of color.⁵

Impact

Senate Bill 26 would likely **improve racial and economic equity** in Maryland.

¹ Bennett Leckrone, “Utility Bill Aid Available, But Some Don’t Know They Qualify”, Maryland Matters, Feb.10, 2021. [Utility Bill Aid Available, But Some Don’t Know They Qualify - Maryland Matters](#)

² Office of People Counsel, “Maryland Low-Income Market Characterization Report”, 2022 Report Update. September 2022 https://opc.maryland.gov/Portals/o/Files/Publications/Reports/Maryland%20Low-Income%20Market%20Characterization_September%202022%20final.pdf?ver=7fFmfM9UomFT8s81cHe6HQ%3d%3d

³ Suzanne Murrin, “State Use of Express Lane Eligibility for Medicaid and Chip Enrollment.” Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General. Oct. 2016. <https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-06-15-00410.asp>

⁴ Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Megan Schouweiler and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 12.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, analysis from 2021 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

⁵ Danilo Tirisi and Matt Saenz “Economic Security Programs Reduce Overall Poverty, Racial and Ethnic Inequities,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Jul. 1, 2021. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/economic-security-programs-reduce-overall-poverty-racial-and-ethnic>

Support AHA SB26 Maryland Medical Assistance Progr

Uploaded by: Laura Hale

Position: FAV



February 2, 2023

Testimony of Laura Hale
American Heart Association

Support of SB 26 Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Dear Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Honorable Members of the Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the committee today. The American Heart Association extends its strong support for Senate Bill 26 Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment. My name is Laura Hale and I am the Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association.

Access to healthcare is essential and too many Marylanders struggle with the cumbersome paperwork requirements to enroll in the many programs that support health such as Medicaid and SNAP. With this legislation we can help to change all that and make the lives of low-income Marylanders a little bit easier. By automatically granting Medicaid eligibility to children and adults enrolled in SNAP, this will help connect people in need into the programs the state has set up to support them in the first place. Based on Census Bureau data for 2021, it would help over 60,000 uninsured Marylanders get the health coverage they need, including 23,000 Black Marylanders and 28,000 Latinos, making this a way to dramatically reduce the levels of uninsured in Maryland while at the same time improving health equity. This legislation would also eliminate paperwork currently required for over half a million SNAP recipients in Maryland to renew their Medicaid benefits, creating administrative savings for Maryland. In addition, this bill would improve other social determinants of health by streamlining utility assistance enrollment, expanding access to electric assistance, and automatically enrolling seniors into SNAP if they qualify for Supplemental Security Income.

The American Heart Association urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 26 to support the health of all Marylanders.

SB26-ENERGYADVOCATES-FAVORABLE.pdf

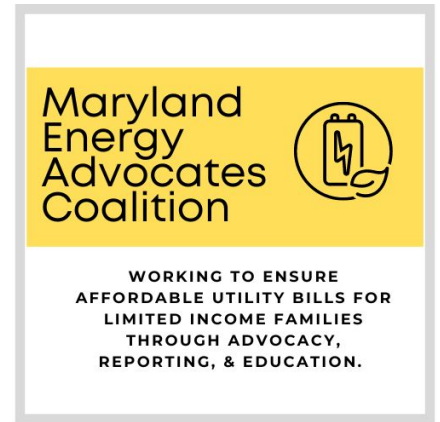
Uploaded by: Laurel Peltier

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF SB26

Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs - Eligibility and Enrollment

Senate Finance Committee Hearing.
February 2, 2023



Madame Chair and members of Senate Finance: Maryland Energy Advocates is a coalition of non-profits, foundations, churches and volunteers that advocate, directly help, and support policies and change to ensure that the Maryland's low income segment will one day have affordable utility bills that run about 6% of their households income.

Utility bills are often over-looked. A joke we say is that, "Few care, or are passionate about, BGE and Pepco's or utility bills, until you are." Then it's usually a crisis with families facing termination notices.

Several of us work directly with Marylanders in home energy utility crisis. Considered low-income by the federal and state government, most are seniors, about 45%, folks that are disabled, out of work, or work, but don't make enough income to cover their family expenses.

Here's how this SB26 could work in reality if passed and implemented well. This is not how it works in the field today.

A family, two seniors, and both are younger than 67, is income-eligible for food assistance and utility bill assistance. This couple earns less than \$2,670 in gross income a month, or \$32,040. Their utility bill averages about \$2,000 and with meds and food and rent, they're struggling. In September, they go around their house and gather a bunch of verification papers to prove they indeed are low-income: state ID's, actual social security cards, rental lease and payments for rent, current Social Security benefits letters, Pepco and Washington Gas bills. They drive on a Tuesday to their local Montgomery County Department of Social Security office. They wait for a bit, and then a State certifier works with them and indeed they are low-income, they need

food stamps, now called SNAP, and energy assistance to get monthly bill payment credits. One trip, one application, one intake visit by the state, and one set of documents. This elderly couple has applied for and will receive income-eligible grants to help bolster their family's finances.

This common-sense process is how it's supposed to have worked for years.

Yet today, it seems 95% of the folks we help in the field are enrolled in SNAP, but not in energy assistance. It seems few in the system mentioned energy assistance.

These SNAP-enrolled families are unaware, and not enrolled in, OHEP bill pay assistance. Now, usually around January after the heater's been running expensive fuel, they are in crisis with sky-high Pepco and Washington Gas bills. The helper teams in the field, the OHEP offices' staff and the residents are all "in the foxhole" scrambling to get this couple's application through OHEP energy assistance in time to beat the power cut off. If this second, sometime third state benefit application is done, again, on another day, by the same couple, on time, a 55-day account hold is placed on the utility account so that this energy assistance application can run its long course through OHEP, get approved, get grants credited to account and avoid cut-off.

SB26 is a smart, responsible streamlined bill that makes our state more effective for income-eligible benefits. Energy Advocates thanks Senator Augustine for his sponsorship of this highly important bill.

sb26- MCHP, SNAP, etc., FIN 2-2-2023.pdf

Uploaded by: Lee Hudson

Position: FAV



Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Testimony prepared for the
Finance Committee
on
Senate Bill 26
February 2, 2023
Position: **Favorable**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify for sufficiency and well-being for all. I am Lee Hudson, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are a faith community with three judicatories in our State.

Sufficient livelihood and access to appropriate and affordable health care for all people have been adopted in moral deliberation statements within our community (“Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All,” 1999; “Caring for Health,” 2003).

Maryland has done good things with the simple mechanism of notification about access to health care through tax filing; for example, *Senate Bill 369* of 2022. **Senate Bill 26** expands that policy principle with convergent eligibility. It would streamline sign-up for services such as Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and energy assistance programs by establishing a categorical eligibility, one application standard that allows an individual to enroll in all the available services.

The services and eligibility for them are already established. Yet there remain people without adequate medical care, or nutrition, or safe shelter, who do not, or cannot apply. Multiple application processes, with annual renewal requirements, asking for the same information, amount to a barrier for underserved clients for State services. It also creates an unnecessary State administrative burden.

Senate Bill 26 would bring the programs to eligible clients in an efficient and effective manner, illustrated by prior “express lane” State initiatives that have increased participation. Because of that, and because of the good it would do for residents of the State, we urge your favorable report.

Lee Hudson

WA- SB 26 - Public Benefit Eligibility - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Lisa Klingenmaier

Position: FAV



Welfare Advocates

Founded 1979

228 W. Lexington Street — Suite 220 • Baltimore, Maryland 21201-3432

Phone: 410.261.5874 • Fax: 410.889.0203

Senate Bill 26 Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Senate Finance Committee
February 2, 2023

Support

Welfare Advocates is a statewide coalition of social service organizations, advocacy groups, faith communities, and community members, whose mission it is to educate about and advocate for an adequate safety net and public policies that support families moving towards economic stability.

Welfare Advocates supports SB 26, which requires the Department of Human Services and the Department of Health to streamline access to safety-net programs by automatically enrolling individuals in public benefits based on their eligibility for other safety-net programs.

Amidst record inflation and unemployment, many Marylanders are struggling to make ends meet. Before the pandemic, one in ten Marylanders were living at or below the Federal Poverty Line, and COVID has only exacerbated the struggles of low-income individuals and families.¹ Predictably, the need for safety-net programs in our state has exploded, and has put a spotlight on the entrenched barriers and inequities that have long existed in our programs and policies to address and end poverty, especially for Black and Brown communities that have disproportionately borne the brunt of economic downturns due to systemic racism and historic disinvestment. A dizzying maze of applications, departments, and varying eligibility requirements means that - even for Marylanders who qualify – safety-net programs only reach a fraction of the people who need them.

Public benefit programs – like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid - provide vital resources to low-income families, and strengthen our State's economy. Families use benefits to purchase housing, food, transportation, and other basic needs. These funds are immediately spent in the local economy, generating economic growth. Consequently, improving access to safety-net programs benefits families and Maryland's businesses, communities, and local economies. In regards to health coverage, studies demonstrate that individuals who are uninsured have higher rates of illness, die younger, and are often only one emergency department visit away from a financial crisis.² Without improving access to safety-net programs, Marylanders will continue to bear the societal costs of uncompensated care, homelessness, and poverty.

SB 26 simplifies access to safety-net programs by automatically enrolling individuals in benefits they are eligible for based on their eligibility for other programs. Welfare Advocates believes that all Marylanders should have easy access to the public benefits they are eligible for, and categorical eligibility is an important step to improve the economic security of Marylanders struggling in or near poverty.

WA appreciates your consideration, and respectfully urges a favorable report on SB 26.

Submitted by Lisa Klingenmaier, *Chair of Welfare Advocates*

¹ US Census Bureau. 2020. American Community Survey

² Kaiser Family Foundation. 2022. *Key Facts about the Uninsured Population*. <https://www.kff.org/uninsured/issue-brief/key-facts-about-the-uninsured-population/>

SB0026-473123-01.pdf

Uploaded by: Malcolm Augustine

Position: FAV



SB0026/473123/1

AMENDMENTS
PREPARED
BY THE
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES

01 FEB 23
13:45:36

BY: Senator Augustine
(To be offered in the Finance Committee)

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 26
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 11, after “program;” insert “requiring the Workgroup on Low–Income Utility Assistance to submit a final report to certain committees of the General Assembly on or before a certain date with certain recommendations;”.

On page 2, after line 11, insert:

“BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Chapter 638 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2021
Section 3(a)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Chapter 638 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2021
Section 3(g)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Chapter 639 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2021
Section 3(a)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Chapter 639 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2021
Section 3(g)”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 5, after line 6, insert:

“Chapter 638 of the Acts of 2021

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

(a) There is a Workgroup on Low–Income Utility Assistance.

(g) (1) The Workgroup shall submit [a] AN INITIAL report of the study, findings, and recommendations, including recommended legislation and regulatory changes, to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Economic Matters Committee, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article, on or before January 1, 2022.

(2) THE WORKGROUP SHALL SUBMIT A FINAL REPORT OF THE STUDY, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS, INCLUDING RECOMMENDED LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY CHANGES, TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE AND THE HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2–1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2024.

Chapter 639 of the Acts of 2021

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

(a) There is a Workgroup on Low–Income Utility Assistance.

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_SB 26 Economic Action Maryland (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Marceline White

Position: FAV



Testimony to the Senate Finance Committee
SB 26 Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health
Program, and Social Services Programs-Eligibility and Enrollment
Position: Favorable

February 2, 2022

The Honorable Melony Griffith, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Third Floor, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Senate Finance Committee

Honorable Chair Griffith and Members of the Committee:

Economic Action Maryland (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) is a people-centered movement to expand economic rights, housing justice, and community reinvestment for working families, low-income communities, and communities of color. Economic Action Maryland provides direct assistance today while passing legislation and regulations to create systemic change in the future.

We are here in support of SB 26 and urge a favorable report.

Our direct service programs screen individuals for eligibility for food, energy, and other cost-savings programs. In 2022, we saved Maryland families \$50,000 through earned-benefits screenings. Each year we screen hundreds of consumers across the state that were unaware that they qualified for these critical programs. Often, individuals save enough to move from financial precarity to being able to save a portion of their income.

In addition, many programs require onerous paperwork and financial records in order to qualify. Many of our clients move frequently and these financial records may be misplaced or difficult to locate. The paperwork is not simple and requires time to navigate—time that may be lacking for individuals working an hourly job or balancing work and child/elder care. This is one of the reasons our program is so successful, we assist clients who need dedicated assistance to complete the paperwork to receive assistance.

We strongly support SB 26 because we believe that presumptive eligibility makes sense. If an individual has demonstrated financial need to receive state assistance in one area, it is reasonable to assume that the individual will qualify for other programs with similar income thresholds. Fast-tracking

2209 Maryland Ave · Baltimore, MD · 21218 · 410-220-0494

info@econaction.org · www.econaction.org · Tax

ID 52-2266235

individuals into these programs benefits struggling families, reduces paperwork and inefficiencies in the system, and ensures that our programs are reaching families as intended.

For all these reasons, we support SB 26 and urge a favorable report.

Best,

Marceline White
Executive Director

2209 Maryland Ave · Baltimore, MD · 21218 · 410-220-0494

info@econaction.org · www.econaction.org · Tax

ID 52-2266235

Economic Action Maryland is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and your contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

SB26_FAV_AARP.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Olsen

Position: FAV



One Park Place | Suite 475 | Annapolis, MD 21401-3475
1-866-542-8163 | Fax: 410-837-0269
aarp.org/md | md@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpmd
facebook.com/aarpmd

**SB 26 Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program,
and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment
FAVORABLE
Senate Finance Committee
February 2, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chair Griffith, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. I am Mary Lee Olsen, a member of and lead advocate for AARP Maryland. AARP is the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization representing the interests of Americans aged 50 and older and their families. Key priorities of our organization include helping all Marylanders achieve financial and health security and supporting safety net for seniors and low-income households in the state of Maryland is a priority.

AARP MD and its almost 870,000 members support SB 26 Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, 3 and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment. We thank Senator Augustine for sponsoring this critical piece of legislation.

SB26 is especially needed in improving the energy assistance grant participation for seniors who are income-qualified for SNAP and Office of Home Energy Programs energy assistance (OHEP). Nearly 45% of households eligible for OHEP are seniors.

Today, SNAP and OHEP are two income-eligible benefits that are processed separately by Maryland. Income-eligible seniors usually complete separate OHEP and SNAP applications and often apply at different locations and at different times. This duplicity within our state system has led to many income-eligible seniors not knowing about energy assistance, yet very much needing utility bill assistance.

AARP MD supports streamlining at enrollment safety net programs that help Marylanders safely age in place. We are optimistic with these changes will help more older Marylanders get enrolled in safety net programs at one time, not filling out multiple applications and multiple places.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask the Senate Finance Committee for a favorable report. If you have questions or comments, please contact Tammy Bresnahan at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.



SB 26_FAV_Virtual and Written_Melanie Townsend Dig

Uploaded by: Melanie Townsend Diggs

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 26

Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Before the Senate Finance Committee

By Melanie Townsend Diggs

February 2, 2023

Chair Griffith and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 26.

I am currently the South Area Director for the Prince George's County Memorial Library System, and I have served on the Board of Families USA, a national consumer health care advocacy group. I fully support this legislation which would reduce barriers for Marylanders to get the health care services they need. I personally was enrolled in Medicaid during a difficult time for my family, and I appreciated the people who helped me get connected and enrolled because I did not know that I was eligible.

As a librarian, I have also assisted people who had trouble navigating the health care system. We in Maryland need to do everything that we can to make the system as simple as possible, so everyone is able to access the coverage for which they are already eligible.

This bill would help break down barriers to access because Marylanders who have already gone through the process of enrolling in SNAP will be automatically enrolled into Medicaid, and by doing so, reducing the unnecessary paperwork for SNAP recipients to remain enrolled in Medicaid. This bill would also help Marylanders get connected with utility services and help seniors enroll in SNAP, making this bill like a one-stop-shop for beneficial services to a community in need.

Thank you very much for your consideration and I urge a favorable report for SB 26.

MD Catholic Conference_FAV_SB0026.pdf

Uploaded by: MJ Kraska

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 02, 2023

SB 26

Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Senate Finance Committee

Position: Favorable

The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 26 requires the Maryland Department of Health to establish an Express Lane Eligibility Program by January 1, 2025, to enroll individuals, based on certain eligibility, in the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and the Maryland Children's Health Program. Additionally, would require the Department of Human Services to enroll individuals, based on certain eligibility, in the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program and would require the Office of Home Energy Programs to enroll certain individuals in certain energy assistance programs.

The Maryland Catholic Conference urges the preservation of funding for the social safety net, especially in areas of poverty alleviation, hunger and nutrition, affordable housing, and lifesaving policies to address climate change. Senate Bill 26 seeks to form a "Circle of Protection" around programs that serve poor and vulnerable people in our communities and avoid placing additional burdens on people and families struggling to live in dignity.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a **favorable** report for Senate Bill 26.

SB 0026- LWVMD- FAV- Express Lane Eligibility.pdf

Uploaded by: Nora Miller Smith

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SB 0026: Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs- Eligibility and Enrollment

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

DATE: February 2, 2023

The League of Women Voters Maryland supports **Senate Bill 0026: Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs- Eligibility and Enrollment**, which would help more low-income Marylanders obtain health insurance coverage by decreasing the administrative burdens associated with Medicaid's application and renewal processes. The bill would establish Express Lane Eligibility, automatically granting Medicaid eligibility to adults and children who already qualify for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits.

The League of Women Voters believes that healthcare is a human right. All Marylanders need accessible, equitable, affordable, quality health care. But access to that health care is largely determined by one's ability to obtain health insurance.

Lack of health insurance can be deadly.¹ An Institute of Medicine report found that "**The uninsured have poorer health and shortened lives**.... Uninsured patients, even when acutely ill or seriously injured, cannot always obtain needed care..."

Almost 6% of Maryland residents remain uninsured. Per the *Commonwealth Fund's 2022 Scorecard on State Health System Performance*, Maryland did poorly on "disparity indicators" such as uninsured adults (ranking 23rd out of the 50 states and D.C.), uninsured children (28th), and adults who went without care because of costs in the past year (39th). Racial and ethnic disparities were also evident in the report. While only 4% of White Marylanders were uninsured, 29% of Latinx residents had no health insurance coverage.

Passing Senate Bill 26 would increase the number of low-income Marylanders with health insurance by establishing categorical eligibility. **Marylanders would be able to enroll in multiple safety-net programs with the same eligibility requirements at the same time**, thus eliminating many of the administrative burdens that often prevent people from obtaining

¹ "The Relationship of Health Insurance and Mortality: Is Lack of Insurance Deadly?" by Steffie Woolhandler, MD, MPH, et al, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 19 September 2017

the assistance for which they're qualified. **Categorical eligibility would eliminate the current requirement that, even if already proven eligible for one low-income assistance program such as SNAP, an individual needs to go through the same financial eligibility determination process, requiring submission of essentially the same paperwork, to qualify for or keep their energy assistance or Medicaid benefits.**

Currently a federal health emergency has paused Medicaid redeterminations, but once the emergency ends, then Medicaid recipients will have to renew their benefit eligibility through a redetermination process once every twelve months. Renewal instructions will be sent to Medicaid recipients by mail, and they will have to respond by submitting the requested income information according to a strict timeline. But mail can be lost, instructions misunderstood, or forms filled out incorrectly due to language or literacy barriers. Missed deadlines and incomplete paperwork lead to lapsed coverage, and getting benefits reinstated is a cumbersome and time-consuming process, piling on additional administrative costs for the State.

The real-life consequence of this complicated, inefficient system will be that many Marylanders will not get the medical care they need. Streamlining the process is in the best interests of patients, providers, and the Maryland Medicaid system itself. Administrative costs will decrease, thus enabling more Medicaid funds to be used for disease prevention and treatment.

Passing Senate Bill 26 and instituting Express Lane Eligibility will streamline the application process for crucial assistance programs. This program is of vital importance, and for that reason the **League of Women Voters Maryland and its 1,500+ members urge the committee to give a favorable report to Senate Bill 0026.**

SB026-DTMG-FAV-2-2-23.pdf

Uploaded by: Olivia Bartlett

Position: FAV



Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team

Committee: Finance

Testimony on: SB026 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 1, 2023

Bill Contact: Senator Malcolm Augustine

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with members in all districts in Montgomery County as well as in several neighboring counties. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep all Maryland residents healthy and safe in a clean environment and which promote equity across all our diverse communities. SB026 will support those goals by streamlining the process by which people sign up for safety-net services such as Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and fuel and utility energy assistance programs. By establishing categorical eligibility, one application process will allow an individual to enroll in all services.

SB026 would:

- Implement Express Lane Eligibility (ELE) to automatically grant Medicaid eligibility to children and adults who SNAP already has determined meet financial eligibility requirements.
- Streamline the process for receiving assistance by automatically enrolling someone for fuel and utility assistance if they qualify for SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Means-Tested Veteran’s Affairs Benefits.
- Support seniors by automatically enrolling someone for SNAP if they qualify for SSI.
- Expand eligibility to participate in the electric universal service program to 200% of the FPL.

Thirty thousand SNAP households who claim a heating or cooling expense currently do not receive Energy Assistance. Sixty-five thousand people, or seventeen percent of those covered by SNAP, are not covered by Medicaid. Streamlining and creating one eligibility process will allow additional eligible families in Maryland to be served essential assistance with little to no administrative cost increases.

For all these reasons, DTMG strongly supports SB026 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Olivia Bartlett
DoTheMostGood Maryland Team
oliviabartlett@verizon.net
240-751-5599

SB0026_FAV_MedChi, MDAAP, MACHC, MDACOG_Med. Ass.,

Uploaded by: Pam Kasemeyer

Position: FAV



MID-ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS



ACOG

The American College of
Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Maryland Section

The Maryland State Medical Society
63711 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, MD 263701-5516
410.539.0872
Fax: 410.547.0915
1.800.492.1056
www.medchi.org

TO: The Honorable Melony Griffith, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Malcolm Augustine

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Andrew G. Vetter
Christine Krone
410-244-7000

DATE: February 2, 2023

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 26 – *Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, and the Maryland Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 26.

Senate Bill 26 establishes an express lane eligibility program for enrollment of individuals in Medicaid, the Children's health program, the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), and the energy assistance program. It requires the State to apply for a federal waiver, if necessary, to maximize the number of State residents who may qualify for the express lane eligibility program. The legislation also amends the eligibility requirements for the energy assistance program to ensure enrollment can be accomplished through the express lane eligibility program.

Creation of this program will facilitate enrollment in key safety programs that address the needs of Maryland's most challenged populations. It is often challenging for these individuals to understand how to access enrollment and in many instances, individuals may not know what programs exist or how to enroll. Senate Bill 26 will enhance cross agency cooperation and communication and will provide an efficient and effective approach to ensuring the eligible Maryland residents are able to access all programs for which they may be eligible. A favorable report is requested.

SB0026_CC_Vaughan_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Regan Vaughan

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 26
Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Senate Finance Committee
February 2, 2023

Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports SB 26, which requires the Department of Human Services and Department of Health to streamline access to safety-net programs by auto-enrolling individuals in public benefits based on their eligibility for other safety-net programs.

Inspired by the Gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. For 100 years, Catholic Charities has accompanied Marylanders as they age with dignity, obtain empowering careers, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success and feel welcome as immigrant neighbors.

As one of the largest human service providers in Maryland, we work every day with low-income families and see firsthand the challenges and difficulties they face attempting to enroll in and sustain public benefits. We have caseworkers across our programs and across the state that help families and seniors apply for benefits like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA). Cumbersome applications, missing paperwork, refusals to accept written applications, and materials sent in the wrong language are just some of the barriers our caseworkers see every day when helping families navigate safety-net program eligibility. We know that public benefits are vitally important in the effort to assist low-income seniors and families meet their basic needs, but enrolling and maintaining benefits is a herculean effort.

Passing SB 26 will directly improve the economic security of low-income Marylanders, and generate economic growth for the state as a whole. Automatically enrolling Marylanders in public benefits they are eligible for based on their eligibility for similar programs will reduce the burdensome paperwork and travel often required to apply for benefits. Automating public benefit eligibility will increase access to reliable food, health care, and utilities for the families we work with, building their overall economic security. Improving access to public benefits also benefits our state’s local economy and public health: healthy families with secure incomes go into their local communities and spend their resources on clothes, food, and other basic necessities. Categorical eligibility – like proposed in SB 26 – is a national best practice that Maryland should adopt in the effort to ensure low-income seniors and families receive all of the public benefits they are eligible for.

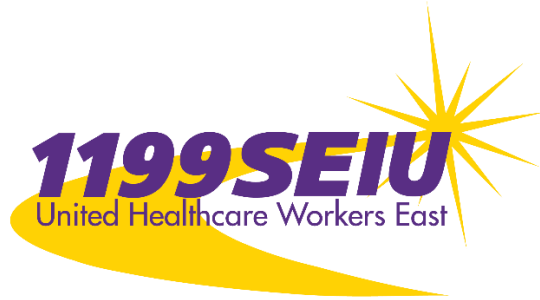
On behalf of the individuals and families we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 26.

Submitted By: Regan Vaughan, Director of Advocacy

SB26Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: ricarra jones

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF SENATE BILL 26

Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Chair Griffith and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name Ricarra Jones and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation, representing over 10,000 members in Maryland & Washington DC alone. Our union supports SB26 to automatically grant Medicaid eligibility to children and adults enrolled in SNAP. We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report.

When enacted, SB26 will benefit the 60,000 uninsured Marylanders who need health coverage. If patients have health insurance, they are less likely to delay receiving preventative and primary healthcare, so they are less likely to end up in the emergency room with a more severe condition. Maryland has the longest hospital wait times in the country in large part due to the severe short staffing crisis that is burdening overworked and underpaid healthcare workers. Much needs to be done on a policy front to implement safe staffing ratios in our hospitals – and in the meantime, making sure patients have affordable health insurance is important so that patients don't end up in the hospital with preventable illnesses. Furthermore, when patients don't receive healthcare until they are forced to go to the emergency room, their conditions become more expensive to treat, leaving them with crushing medical debt.

SB26 will also improve health equity in Maryland. Of the 60,000 uninsured Marylanders mentioned above, 23,000 Black are Marylanders and 28,000 are Latinx Marylanders. Furthermore, the bill would address other social determinants of health by making the enrollment process for utility assistance more efficient, broadening access to electric assistance, and enrolling seniors who qualify for Supplemental Security Income into SNAP automatically. Streamlining these processes will ensure that Marylanders don't lose their Medicaid coverage due to cumbersome, unnecessary paperwork.

1199SEIU UHW E. urges a **favorable** report on SB26. Thank you.

In Unity,

Ricarra Jones, Political Director
ricarra.jones@1199.org

Testimony In Support of SB 26 HB 111 - Senate Fina

Uploaded by: Rich Ceruolo

Position: FAV



January 30, 2023

Maryland Senate
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD. 21401

In Support of HB 111 / SB 26: Equal Access to Maryland's Medical, Health, Heat and Food Programs

Members of the Maryland Senate's Finance Committee. We are an organization of military and non-military families with over 1500 members and support our local non-profits that fill necessary roles in our non-profit support and services networks. We fully support SB 26 and the help that it will bring to all the citizens in need of assistance, especially those that are critically ill, senior citizens living on meager budgets, families living in poverty or those living with a disability.

We stand with our partners in this work, Partnership for Children Youth and Families and Critical Needs Program and the Cancer Support Foundation. Programs like energy assistance, food assistance, health care and heat / fuel assistance are absolutely crucial to the very survival of these populations of Maryland citizens.

Access to these programs has been a too high of a hurdle that many simply cannot overcome. Barriers like the complicated MD Think system, access to the portal & application as well as the people trained in navigating this system, are often hard to find and benefit from their knowledge. These barriers to these necessary services should not exist. Especially as these programs impact a variety of communities including; Black, Brown, Disabled, the elderly or infirmed, Poor, Non-English Speakers, Veterans and Non-Veterans alike.

And in these early days of the early implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's future, their services are something that all of us with school aged children, and local school districts will be relying on even more heavily.

The future of Maryland's interlocking support service networks supports the lives of so many citizens. And the future care of all Maryland citizens relies on these networks and its service providers. Please support and protect the rights of citizens that struggle with a critical illness or disability with improving access to these services programs and grants. Today and into the future of the implementation of Maryland's Blueprint law. We ask the committee to please offer your full support for Senate Bill 26.

Thank you for your time, and for considering our testimony today.

Mr. Richard Ceruolo | richceruolo@gmail.com Parent, Lead Advocate and Director of Public Policy
Parent Advocacy Consortium <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ParentAdvocacyConsortium>

SB 26- Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryla

Uploaded by: Robin McKinney

Position: FAV



SB 26- Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment
House Finance Committee
February 2nd, 2023
SUPPORT

Chairwoman Griffith, Vice-Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 26. This bill will streamline the process by which people sign up for safety-net services such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and energy assistance programs. By establishing categorical eligibility, one application process will allow an individual to enroll in all services.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program ‘VITA’, offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH’s tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

There are many Marylanders that are low-income and are eligible to receive public benefits and services that could alleviate the strain of coping with inflation and future economic downturns. There are a number of programs available but accessing those programs can be a daunting task. Each department has separate application forms and similar but disconnected processes. This produces a confusing series of steps that fracture a family’s time and resources into needlessly inefficient exertions. **The more stress an individual or family experiences, the less capacity they have to navigate through complicated processes.** SB 126 will not only help families apply for multiple benefits they are eligible for, but it will also help ease the administrative burden for state agencies.

This bill will provide an opportunity for better coordination among service agencies and lead to a smoother experience for struggling families. The effects of COVID-19 showed the need to simplify applying for social benefits for families and state agencies. There was an influx of families who applied for assistance and a significant delay in receiving it due to backlog. CASH has seen a significant increase in our client's needs pertaining to benefit screening, and SB 26 will ensure that individuals and families can access and receive the assistance they truly need.

This bill will:

- Implement Express Lane Eligibility (ELE) to automatically grant Medicaid eligibility to children and adults whom SNAP has already found to have very low income.
- Streamline the process for receiving help by automatically enrolling someone for utility assistance if they qualify for SNAP, TANF, SSI, or means-tested veteran’s benefits.
- Support seniors by automatically enrolling someone for SNAP if they qualify for Supplemental Security Income.
- Increase the EUSP eligibility income limit to 200% FPL, matching other basic assistance programs offered by the Department of Human Services for low-income families

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 26.

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope

Conner_BMNCBV_FAV_SB26.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Sandra Conner

Position: FAV

**Baptist Ministers' Night Conference of
Baltimore and Vicinity (BMNCBV)**

5405 York Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21212, (443) 386.4739



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 26
BEFORE THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**BY REV. DR. SANDRA CONNER, PRESIDENT, BMNCBV
February 2, 2023**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony for a very important health bill that will automatically grant Medicaid eligibility to children and adults enrolled in SNAP. BMNCBV acknowledges that Maryland has some of the best health systems in the country. It is our understanding that it is ranked 5th in the nation for having the best healthcare system; and we applaud this achievement. However, we believe more can and should be done to improve access to healthcare/coverage and to reduce inequities.

This legislation would help over 60,000 uninsured Marylanders get the health coverage they need, including 23,000 Black Marylanders and 28,000 Latinos, making this a way to dramatically reduce the levels of uninsured in Maryland while at the same time improving health equity. This legislation would also eliminate paperwork currently required for over half a million SNAP recipients in Maryland to renew their Medicaid benefits, creating administrative savings for Maryland. In addition, this bill would improve other social determinants of health by streamlining utility assistance enrollment, expanding access to energy and water assistance, and automatically enrolling seniors into SNAP if they qualify for Supplemental Security Income.

We believe this bill, SB 26, will make some improvements in health coverage and access to health care for the communities that we serve. We pray that our legislators will heed our call and give a favorable report.

We thank you in advance for your actions towards SB 26.

Rev. Dr. Sandra Conner

443.695.2447

revdrconner@gmail.com

SB26_MARYLANDERSAGAINSTPOVERTY-FAVORABLE.pdf

Uploaded by: Stacey Jefferson

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB26

Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Senate Finance Committee

February 2, 2023

Submitted by Kali Schumitz and Mark Huffman, 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

Kali Schumitz, Co-Chair

P: 410-412- 9105 ext 701

E: kschumitz@mdeconomy.org

Mark Huffman, Co-Chair

P: (301) 776-0442 x1033

E: MHuffman@laureladvocacy.org

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports SB26, which requires the Maryland Department of Health to start an Express Lane Eligibility Program to enroll individuals into certain programs. And this bill requires the Department of Human Services to categorically make eligible and automatically enroll with one streamlined application income-eligible individuals and households for SNAP and Energy Assistance.

SB26's benefits are significant:

- Automatically enrolling people for energy bill pay assistance if they qualify for SNAP, TANF, SSI and means-tested veteran's benefits.
- Reducing the duplicity of multiple trips, multiple documents, for residents.
- Reducing the intake flow for state benefit offices.
- Ensuring that seniors and vulnerable low-income household's power stays on as many receive SNAP, went through the SNAP application process, and certifiers missed the opportunity to check for energy assistance needs.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB26. MAP thanks Senator Augustine for this common-sense bill.

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.

Stephanie Klapper_MHCFA_FAV_SB26.pdf

Uploaded by: Stephanie Klapper

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 26

Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Before the Senate Finance Committee

By Stephanie Klapper, Deputy Director, Maryland Health Care For All! Coalition

February 2, 2023

Chair Griffith, Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 26, which would automatically grant Medicaid eligibility to children and adults enrolled in SNAP. Special thank you to Senator Augustine for sponsoring this critical legislation. I am testifying on behalf of the [Maryland Health Care for All! Coalition](#) which is made up of over 300 faith, business, labor, community, and health care organizations across the state, and our mission is quality, affordable health care for all Marylanders.

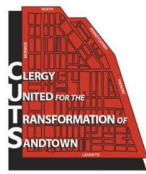
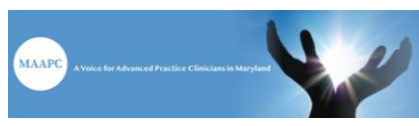
Under your leadership over 400,000 Marylanders have enrolled in health coverage since the passage of the Affordable Care Act. Maryland was the first in the nation to create an Easy Enrollment program to allow Marylanders to start the enrollment process by checking a box on their state tax return, and other states are now following our example. Maryland then built on that progress by adding a similar checkbox to its unemployment insurance forms. Programs like these have led to Maryland cutting the rate of uninsured in half to six percent.

But, there is more we need to do. This legislation would help Marylanders who have already demonstrated that they are very low-income through the SNAP program by automatically enrolling them into Medicaid. Based on [Census Bureau data for 2021](#), this would help over 60,000 uninsured Marylanders get the health coverage they need, including 23,000 Black Marylanders and 28,000 Latinos, making this a way to dramatically reduce the levels of uninsured in Maryland while at the same time improving health equity.

This legislation would also eliminate paperwork currently required for over half a million SNAP recipients in Maryland to renew their Medicaid benefits once the public health emergency ends and Medicaid redeterminations begin again. This will reduce the number of Marylanders eligible for Medicaid who lose their coverage because of burdensome paperwork requirements, while also creating administrative savings for Maryland.

In addition, this bill would improve other social determinants of health by streamlining utility assistance enrollment, expanding access to electric assistance, and automatically enrolling seniors into SNAP if they qualify for Supplemental Security Income.

Thanks to your leadership, Maryland has one of the top five health care systems in the entire nation, and SB 26 will help us continue to lead. We urge a favorable report for SB 26.



SB 26 - LBCMD - FAV

Uploaded by: Ufuoma Agarin

Position: FAV



February 2, 2023

Senator Melony Griffith, Chairwoman
Finance Committee
3 East Wing
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland Inc. has voted to offer **favorable** support for Senate Bill 26 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment. **This bill is a 2023 legislative priority of the Black Caucus.**

This legislation will streamline the process by which people sign up for safety-net services such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and energy assistance programs. By establishing categorical eligibility, one application process will allow an individual to enroll in all services.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2021, 62% of adult recipients receiving SNAP benefits identified as Black/African American. To receive assistance, Maryland’s enrollees and recipients are required to submit applications and documentations for review to the relevant State agency, and severally if applying for multiple services. The current process creates unnecessary barriers for households that have limited access to internet and/or transportation yet seek to obtain safety net services to sustain and support their most basic needs. We believe that by shifting to automatic enrollment of eligible SNAP recipients, this legislation, in effect, will better help to support Black Marylanders and households in need of safety net services, including but not limited to Medicaid, Temporary Cash Assistance, Supplemental Security Income, and Energy Assistance.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports Senate Bill 26 and would appreciate your favorable support of this legislation.

Jheanelle Wilkins

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins

Chair, Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland

SB0026_DHS_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Sledge

Position: FWA

Date: February 2, 2023

Bill number: SB0026

Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill title: **Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment**

DHS Position: **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide written support and recommendation for amendment to Senate Bill 26 (SB 26).

The Department supports the intent of Senate Bill 26 as it would streamline eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Office of Home Energy Program (OHEP) applications. This piece of legislation will impact two processes. First, it will make the application process for all applicants faster, streamlined, and uniform. Second, it seeks to enroll approximately 32,000 additional prospective households for the energy assistance program based on information DHS has learned from the SNAP’s caseload of households and individuals currently claiming a utility expense.

Senate Bill 26 addresses the income eligibility requirements for the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP). The legislation would serve the citizens of Maryland in need of assistance by providing a waiver to customers in the State. It would enhance the client’s experience, cut down on processing times and administrative burdens, and extend benefits to people eligible, but not currently receiving OHEP or SNAP benefits. This piece of legislation would allow DHS to reach a broader segment across the State of Maryland.

The Department of Human Services recommends amending the language on page 4, line 19 as follows:

(II) The OFFICE SHALL ENROLL IN ANY FUEL AND UTILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ANY **HOUSEHOLD WITH AN** INDIVIDUAL WHO MEETS THE FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS ESTABLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR A RECIPIENT OF:

The Department supports Senate Bill 26 if amendments are included in the Committee’s report as recommended above. The Department is grateful to offer our support and collaboration on SB 26 and requests a favorable with amendments report.



2a - SB 26 - FIN - MDH - LOSWA.docx (1) (1).pdf

Uploaded by: State of Maryland

Position: FWA



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Acting Secretary

February 2, 2023

The Honorable Melony Griffith
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: SB 26 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services – Eligibility and Enrollment – Letter of Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Griffith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter to support with amendments for Senate Bill (SB) 26 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services – Eligibility and Enrollment. MDH supports establishment of an Express Lane Eligibility (ELE) program to expedite renewal of coverage for existing Medicaid and Maryland Children’s Health Program (MCHP) participants, subject to budget approval.

SB 26 will require MDH to establish an Express Lane Eligibility (ELE) program to streamline and expedite enrollment of eligible individuals in the Maryland Medicaid and MCHP. The bill requires MDH to designate the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as the Express Lane Agency (ELA) to support the program and facilitate Medicaid/MCHP eligibility determinations. MDH supports SB 26 with amendments to establish an ELE program using SNAP data for renewals, consistent with the approach adopted by Massachusetts MassHealth, the state’s Medicaid Program, as described below.

Current federal statute permits state agencies to adopt the ELE option under the Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA), P.L. 111-3. CHIPRA allows state Medicaid and/or CHIP agencies to use information already collected by another participating State agency to determine whether a child meets Medicaid and/or CHIP eligibility requirements for enrollment or renewal of coverage. The ELE option does not apply to adults.

In addition, President Biden recently enacted the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328), which requires all State Medicaid and CHIP agencies to provide up to 12 months of continuous eligibility for children by January 1, 2024. This federal requirement guarantees full-year Maryland Medicaid/MCHP coverage for eligible Maryland children up to age 19. MDH is reviewing system requirements for implementing this new requirement and has set a tentative

target date for implementation in August 2023. Implementation of this initiative is expected to have a positive impact on enrollment for children.

MDH has been exploring the best means of implementing a SNAP-based ELE approach into the State's eligibility system. Specifically, subject to budget approval, MDH can commit to implementing an ELE program that emulates the Massachusetts MassHealth approach. MassHealth partners with SNAP to renew coverage for members of the SNAP household up to age 65 already enrolled in Medicaid and/or CHIP through a data matching process. The SNAP eligibility decision is used to verify ongoing residency in the state and serves as a proxy for income at renewal. Medicaid benefits are renewed based on the child's eligibility for SNAP. Parents, legal caretaker relatives, and childless adults who are part of the same household group as these children are included in this process and also have their Medicaid coverage renewed if they are eligible for SNAP.

Notably, State Medicaid agencies using the Express Lane option must still ensure that individuals enrolled in SNAP have submitted appropriate documentation to establish their status as citizens, nationals, or qualified aliens, in accordance with the applicable documentation requirements. Medicaid agencies are *not* permitted to borrow eligibility findings with respect to citizenship from an Express Lane agency. Further, in discussions with Maryland to date, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has indicated that these requirements are not subject to waiver under authorities governed by CMS. Use of SNAP data for the purpose of automatic renewals allows MassHealth to rely on citizenship/immigration documentation previously submitted at the time of initial application for Medicaid or CHIP, substantially streamlining the ELE process for consumers.

To successfully operationalize SB 26, MDH will need to develop new, appropriate data use agreements in partnership with the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS), the State's administrator of SNAP. While no such agreement currently exists, MDH will coordinate with DHS to advance these efforts. Additionally, while MDH cannot reliably estimate the potential impact on revenue or expenditures, nor renewal outcomes, MDH estimates new costs will be subject to a federal match rate of 61%.

MDH stands committed to assisting children and their families with renewing their Medicaid/MCHP coverage as well as reducing administrative burden for participants. In collaboration with the DHS, this approach will help support Maryland's most vulnerable children and families and meet the interests of SB 26. If you have any questions, please contact Megan Peters, Acting Director of Governmental Affairs, at megan.peters@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,



Laura Hererra Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Acting Secretary

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 26

(First Reading File Bill)

On Page 2, in line 21, strike “ENROLL” and replace with “RENEW” and after “INDIVIDUALS” add “ELIGIBILITY”.

Strike lines 24 and 25.

In line 26, strike “(III)” and replace with “(II)”.

In line 31, strike “(IV)” and replace with “(III)”.

In line 32, replace “ENROLLMENT” with “RENEW”.

2023 SB26 Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Deborah Brocato

Position: UNF



Opposition Statement SB26

Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program,
And Social Services Programs - Eligibility and Enrollment
Deborah Brocato, Legislative Consultant
Maryland Right to Life

We Oppose SB26

On behalf of our 200,000 followers across the state, we respectfully object to SB26. The bill is expanding eligibility and enrollment into the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Maryland Health Children's Program (MHCP) based on "eligibility findings by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program" and "may NOT consider any other income or eligibility requirements." We oppose expanding eligibility without excluding abortion funding.

The Maryland Medical Assistance Program and the Maryland Children's Health Program (MHCP) are the two primary programs used for publicly funded reimbursements to abortion providers in Maryland. The Maryland Department of Legislative Services, in their *Analysis of the FY 2022 Maryland Executive Budget*, shows that Maryland taxpayers are forced to fund elective abortions. For the years 2018, 2019 and 2020, over \$6 million was spent each year for almost 10,000 abortions each year. In that same report, we see that for Fiscal 2020, less than 10 of the almost 10,000 abortions were due to rape, incest or to save the life of the mother.

Medical Assistance Expenditures on Abortion Language attached to the Medicaid budget since 1979 authorizes the use of State funds to pay for abortions under specific circumstances. Specifically, a physician or surgeon must certify that, based on his or her professional opinion, the procedure is necessary. Similar language has been attached to the appropriation for MCHP since its advent in Fiscal 1999. Without language to prohibit abortion funding, expansion of the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and MHCP will certainly increase the number of abortions and thus the amount of taxpayer money spent on abortions.

Maryland is one of only 4 states that forces taxpayer funding of abortion. Maryland taxpayers are forced to subsidize the abortion industry through direct Maryland Medicaid reimbursements to abortion providers, through various state grants and contracts, and through pass-through funding in various state programs. Health insurance carriers are required to provide reproductive health coverage to participate with the Maryland Health Choice program. Programs involved in reproductive health policy include the Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Family Planning Program, maternal and Child Health Bureau, the Children's Cabinet, Maryland Council on School Based Health Centers, Maryland for the Advancement of School Based Health, Community Health Resource Commission, Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP) and Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund.



Opposition Statement SB26, page 2 of 2

Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program,
And Social Services Programs - Eligibility and Enrollment
Deborah Brocato, Legislative Consultant
Maryland Right to Life

Abortion is not healthcare and abortion is never medically necessary. A miscarriage is the ending of a pregnancy *after* the baby has died; an ectopic pregnancy is not a viable pregnancy and the baby cannot continue to develop. Abortion is the destruction of a developing human being and often causes physical and psychological injury to the mother. In the black community, abortion has reached epidemic proportions with half of pregnancies of Black women ending in abortion. The abortion industry has long targeted the Black community with 78% of abortion clinics located in minority communities. **Abortion is the leading killer of black lives.** See www.BlackGenocide.org.

Americans oppose taxpayer funding of abortion. The 2023 Marist poll shows that 60% of Americans, pro-life and pro-choice, oppose taxpayer funding of abortion. 81% of Americans favor public funds being prioritized for health and family planning services that save the lives of mothers and their children including programs for improving maternal health and birth and delivery outcomes, well baby care and parenting classes.

Funding restrictions are constitutional. The Supreme Court of the United States, in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* (2022), overturned *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and held that there is no right to abortion found in the Constitution of the United States. As early as 1980 the Supreme Court affirmed in *Harris v. McRae*, that *Roe* had created a limitation on government, not a government funding entitlement. The Court ruled that the government may distinguish between abortion and other procedures in funding decisions -- noting that "*no other procedure involves the purposeful termination of a potential life*", and held that there is "*no limitation on the authority of a State to make a value judgment favoring childbirth over abortion, and to implement that judgment by the allocation of public funds.*"

For these reasons, we respectfully ask you to oppose **SB26**.

2b - SB 26 - FIN - MACHO - LOI .docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Maryland State of

Position: INFO



**2023 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: SB 26 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services – Eligibility and Enrollment
COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee
POSITION: Letter of Information

BILL ANALYSIS: Senate Bill (SB) 26 would require the Maryland Department of Health to establish an Express Lane Eligibility (ELE) program to streamline and expedite enrollment of eligible individuals in Maryland Medicaid (MA), Maryland Children’s Health Program (MCHP), and Social Services programs. The bill requires MDH to designate the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as the Express Lane Agency (ELA) to support the program and facilitate eligibility determination for MA/MCHP and designated social services programs.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO), the professional association of the State’s twenty-four Health Officers who oversee the State’s twenty-four local public health departments, is committed to assisting Maryland’s most vulnerable children and families with improving access to resources that support healthy outcomes, as well as reducing the administrative burden faced by these families. Current federal statute permits state agencies to adopt the ELE option under the Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA), P.L. 111-3. CHIPRA allows state Medicaid/MCHP agencies to use information already collected by another participating state agency to determine whether a child meets Medicaid/MCHP eligibility requirements for enrollment or renewal of coverage.

To the limits of what state and federal budgets may allow, streamlining eligibility and reducing churn would ensure children and their families have consistent access to health services and decrease the time they spend establishing, or re-establishing, eligibility. LHDs hope that the establishment of an ELE will result in increased efficiencies in LHD staff processing of Medicaid/MCHP applications and renewals. MD had express lane eligibility over a decade ago and it was found to be effective and efficient.

While it is too early to quantify how much these efficiencies will improve administration and reduce costs, it is anticipated that the decrease in documentation requirements will offset any increases in enrollment demand and associated workload. As the benefit to local health departments is realized due to the work of other agencies, existing, or evolving, data agreements and data systems, such MDThink, can be leveraged to automate eligibility determination and reduce labor demands as much as possible and support the inclusion of any children and/or families who may not normally access the proposed ELA.

The Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this letter of information for SB 26. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*

2c - SB 26 - FIN - MHBE - LOI .docx.pdf

Uploaded by: State of Maryland (MD)

Position: INFO

February 2, 2023

The Honorable Melony G. Griffith
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Senate Office Building, 3 East
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – SB 26 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment

Dear Chair Griffith and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

The Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) respectfully submits this letter of information for Senate Bill (SB) 26 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children’s Health Program, and Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment. SB 26 will require the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to establish an Express Lane Eligibility (ELE) program by January 1, 2025, and require MDH to designate the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as the express lane agency (ELA) to use eligibility findings from SNAP to expedite the determination and renewal process for children in Maryland Medicaid or Maryland Children’s Health Program (MCHP). The bill also authorizes MDH to apply for a federal 1115 waiver with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid in order to effectively implement an ELE program in Maryland.

MHBE is generally supportive of state-wide efforts to simplify the enrollment process for residents into health insurance coverage, and has worked with relevant state agencies to implement other programs that simplify and streamline the process. Over the last few years MHBE has partnered with the Maryland Office of the Comptroller, and more recently the Maryland Department of Labor, to implement the Easy Enrollment Programs to facilitate and streamline enrollment in health coverage for individuals who file their taxes during tax season or receive unemployment benefits at any time in the year.

The uninsured rate for Maryland children age 0-18 was 4.3 percent in 2021, accounting for around 46,000 of the 248,000 total uninsured individuals in the state.¹ ELE supports continuous coverage for children by simplifying the renewal process and reducing barriers to enrolling and re-enrolling in coverage, and could contribute to lowering the uninsured rate for Maryland children.

MHBE serves most Medicaid enrollees in the state, around 1.25 million individuals, through the Maryland Health Connection which allows residents to compare health insurance plans and determine eligibility for and enroll in public assistance programs like Medicaid and MCHP. In this role, MHBE is prepared to work with MDH and the Department of Human Services to assist with the implementation, as appropriate, of an Express Lane Eligibility program for Medicaid and MCHP enrollees in Maryland.

For further discussions or questions on MHBE’s potential role in implementation of SB 26,

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation, State Indicators: [Health Insurance Coverage of Children 0-18](#) (2021).



750 E. Pratt St., 6th floor
Baltimore, MD 21202
marylandhbe.com

please contact Johanna Fabian-Marks, Director of Policy and Plan Management at
johanna.fabian-marks@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele Eberle".

Michele Eberle
Executive Director