



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 420

Human Services – Temporary Cash Assistance – Housing Allowance

Senate Finance Committee

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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

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Job Opportunities Task Force

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,
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Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Community Action
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Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Paul's Place

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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 SB 420, which would help Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) recipients better afford housing by providing a monthly housing stipend.

The Maryland Minimum Living Level represents the minimal income needed for a family in Maryland to maintain a basic standard of living, including the cost of food, rent, utilities, household furnishings, clothing, personal care, transportation, medical care, and other critical necessities. The Maryland Department of Human Services calculates and sets the MLL annually. Unfortunately, income supports for low-income Marylanders do not reach the MLL, and most programs fall far below it. The combination of TCA and the Food Supplement Program only equals 61% of the MLL, and the Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP) combined with FSP only reaches 37%. Consequently, low-income Marylanders are often forced to make impossible choices – deciding which basic necessities they must forgo – because their budget is far less than what is minimally required to live in Maryland.

Housing is the largest cost for most families. The National Low Income Housing Coalition lists Maryland as the ninth least affordable state for renters. To afford a modest two-bedroom apartment in the state, a family must earn \$28.93 an hour or \$60,183 annually. A minimum wage worker in Maryland would have to work 78 hours per week, year-round.

SB 420 would provide a modest housing allowance for Maryland families who receive TCA and do not receive any other form of rental assistance. The maximum monthly TCA benefit for a family of three is \$727 – less than half of what is needed to afford market rent for a basic two-bedroom apartment, let alone cover other expenses like utilities, transportation, and clothing.

It's not surprising, then, that more than 1,100 families receiving TCA in Maryland experienced homelessness last year. SB 420 would provide a baseline housing allowance of \$350 per month with an additional \$100 per additional family member per month. This would go a long way toward helping families afford market rent so they can get and keep safe, stable housing while they are receiving TCA.

Passing SB 420 would be a major step towards greater housing stability for TCA recipients and provide a stronger foundation for economic opportunity for Maryland families experiencing poverty. **MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 420.**

***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.*