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SB 420 – Human Services – Temporary Cash Assistance – Housing Allowance
Senate Finance Committee
February 23, 2023

SUPPORT

Chair Griffith, Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 420. This bill will establish a housing allowance for certain households receiving Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA).

The Community Assistance Network (CAN) is the designated anti-poverty Community Action Agency serving Baltimore County and part of the statewide Maryland Community Action Partnership network of 17 such agencies across the State dedicated to alleviating the effects of poverty for those who are most vulnerable. CAN's mission is to work in partnership with the community to develop, operate, and support programs that reduce the vulnerability and empower personal growth, dignity, stability, and self-sufficiency among people in Baltimore County experiencing economic challenges. Throughout our nearly 60-year history, CAN has been dedicated to providing resources to meet people's basic, emergency needs so that they can take concrete steps along a path to self-sufficiency and personal growth.

Each year, CAN serves thousands of neighbors in need in Baltimore County, focusing on areas of housing, food, and economic insecurity; many of whom benefit from TCA. The stark realities of those experiencing economic challenges in Baltimore County and across the state of Maryland cannot be overstated, and the situation has only become more severe as the pandemic has persisted.

Tamesha Roberts is a single mother and TCA recipient currently living in our Eastside Family Shelter. She shares the following:

My name is Tamesha Roberts and I'm a single mother of 3 kids with end stage renal failure and living at the Eastside Family Shelter. I came to the shelter due to losing my apartment due to the increase in rent. My income was \$910 (TCA) and my rent was \$940 a month. The TCA was not enough to pay my rent along with other bills in the household. While here at the Eastside Family Shelter I've been trying resources after resources and there's no help for me when it comes to housing, and with end stage renal kidney failure I'm not able to work. And with me just receiving TCA it's extremely hard for me to get housing. So if this bill is



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passed it will be a great help and a blessing to me and my kids to have a place we can call home and not worry about being homeless ever again and I can take better care of myself and pray my health gets better and I can be around for my kids for a very long time.

Additional funding through SB 420 in support of a housing allowance for TCA recipients will help families like Tamesha's all across Maryland access housing that is more affordable. Rent is considered "affordable" if it composes no more than 30% of a household's income. TCA benefits have declined in value in recent years as rents have continued to rise precipitously. Fair market rent for a 2-bedroom unit in the Baltimore area is \$1,548/month. TCA benefit amounts are variable depending on a variety of factors, but the maximum benefit for a family of three is approximately \$727. Last year in Maryland, more than 1,000 families receiving TCA experienced homelessness.

SB 420 will help families experiencing poverty by:

- Providing an additional \$350 housing allowance for eligible households of one, plus \$100 per additional household member
- Provide greater access to the rental housing market for families experiencing poverty
- Provide families with additional financial resources so they may cover their most basic needs
- Help new mothers who use TCA just after childbirth while they're unable to work with an additional safety net covering housing costs

TCA is a valuable program that needs strengthening with additional funding dedicated toward housing costs to assist Marylanders who are struggling to make ends meet.

For these reasons, we encourage support for SB 420.