



The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN

SB420 HUMAN SERVICES – TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE – HOUSING ALLOWANCE

Maryland families are struggling to find affordable housing, where most experts agree that rent should be no more than 30% of a household monthly income. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), a DC-based nonpartisan research and policy institute that focuses on fiscal and economic policies, analyzed HUD data and found that it takes years for families to get off the waiting list for federal housing subsidies. SB 420 will provide much-needed assistance for vulnerable Marylanders and will give families a bit more financial breathing room during this state and national housing crisis.

According to a study funded by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and prepared by the National Center for Smart Growth and Enterprise Community Partners, Inc., Maryland lacks approximately 85,000 rental units for its lowest income households. The study projects that between 2020 and 2030, Maryland will add an estimated 97,200 extremely and very low-income households. These projections were made immediately before COVID, which has put additional families into poverty and housing insecurity. These individuals look to our state and national leaders for help, but unfortunately, that help doesn't come fast enough.

Among the 50 largest housing agencies in America, only two have average wait times of under a year for families that have made it off of the waiting list for federal housing assistance; the longest have average wait times of up to eight years. On average nationally, families that received vouchers had spent close to two and a half years on waitlists first, exposing many to homelessness, overcrowding, eviction, and other hardship while they waited.

While Maryland currently provides temporary cash assistance for eligible recipients, these benefits are not sufficient to help cover housing costs in addition to other living expenses. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has determined that fair market rent (FMR) in Baltimore County, Baltimore City, and Anne Arundel County is \$1548/month. Similarly, FMR in Prince George's County and Montgomery County is \$1838/month. In a staggering contrast, the maximum amount of TCA available for an eligible family of 3 is only \$727. As a result, rent is unaffordable for families that receive TCA.

SB 420 provides much needed assistance to vulnerable families by:

1. Providing \$350/month for a household of one and an additional \$100/month for each additional household member; and
2. Granting this aid in addition to eligible temporary cash assistance benefits.

This additional aid will enable very low income families to afford rent and have a measure of stability and security. We should not wait for the federal government to act and let Marylanders fall through the cracks in the interim. As leaders of this great State, we have the tools to deliver relief for hundreds of Maryland families. Keeping a roof over our children's heads is the first step.

I urge a favorable report on SB 420, and I thank you for your consideration.