



March 21, 2023

Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
Taylor House Office Building, Room 241
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers strong **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 on the 2023 legislative priority agenda 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

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Chair, Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland