

HB1434 Testimony

Erika Young

Greetings,

I am Erika Whitney Young, Baltimore City resident. I'm here to speak in opposition of HB1434, which would take away the right of Marylanders to receive reimbursement of food and cash benefits when a theft occurs.

I applied for benefits while living in a shelter with two young children, escaping a violent marriage. With the help of my monthly cash allotment I was able to put a deposit on an apartment. It helped me pay bills, upkeep my vehicle, so I could get to and from work and purchase necessities such as toiletries and diapers, and cook healthy meals for my family.

The Department of Human Services could deny valid claims for reimbursement of stolen benefits if there is no funding budgeted or if available funds are exhausted before the year ends.

But, I am concerned that many are not aware that they are entitled to be reimbursed when their benefits are stolen. Inside of all the Baltimore City Department of Social Services offices there are monitors that play continuous loops of informational videos. One clip suggested that those who experience benefit theft first, inform the police. Second, request a new card and lastly to create a stronger passcode. I witnessed this clip play inside DSS since 2022, until it was taken down a few weeks ago.

There are families, unjustly suffering at no fault of their own. A lapse in benefits could set off a chain of events that cause a family to fall behind in their obligations. It may place a family into the same circumstance they were striving to overcome such as debt, homelessness and job loss. Please vote against HB1434 and help families thrive.