



**HB 428 - Community Schools - Rental Assistance for Community School Families Program and Fund
- Establishment
Ways and Means Committee
February 6, 2024
SUPPORT**

Chair Atterbery, Vice-Chair Wilkins and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 428. This bill will establish a rental assistance fund for eligible families with children attending community schools in Maryland. A family may receive rental assistance for up to 12 months through this program.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

Over 100,000 families in Maryland benefited from the pandemic-era federally administered emergency rental assistance program, ensuring that they could stay in their homes.¹ HB 428 would establish a \$10,000,000 appropriated fund to be administered by the Maryland State Department of Education that would continue to support low-income families. There are multiple eligibility requirements that a family must meet to qualify for receiving the emergency rental assistance, including having a child who is enrolled in a community school that receives funding under the Concentration of Poverty School Grant Program.

Rent in Maryland is continuing to increase, making it harder for families to afford to stay in their homes. HB 428 addresses the disproportionate burden placed on Black families who are paying to live in Maryland. In a 2015 survey conducted by the Public Justice Center, ninety four percent (94%) of participant tenants who appeared for rent court in Baltimore City identified as African-American or Black, and eighty percent (80%) identified as women. These numbers play out similarly with evictions in Baltimore City – a Black female-headed household is 296% more likely to be evicted there than a white male-headed household.²

Research has shown that children who experience housing instability have poorer performance outcome in school. HB 428 is crucial to keep families housed and to ensure that children in Maryland community schools are set up for success.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for HB 428.

¹ MDCEP: <https://www.mdeconomy.org/mdcep-calls-on-legislature-governor-to-fund-emergency-rental-assistance/>

² PJC: https://publicjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/JUSTICE_DIVERTED_PJC_DEC15.pdf