



HB 261- Unemployment Insurance - Benefits - Election Judges
Economic Matters Committee
February 14, 2024
SUPPORT

Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair Crosby and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 261. This bill will ensure that Marylanders that serve as election judges do not lose their Unemployment Insurance System (UI) benefits.

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.**

Election judges are essential volunteers that ensure order and help voters at polling stations. They help sign in registered voters, explaining voting procedure and use of voting equipment, provide ballots, and monitor the conduct of the election. They are given a small stipend for their work, but that stipend is more than the \$50 in additional weekly wages allowed for UI recipients.

UI is a social safety net for workers who are temporarily unemployed through no fault of their own. Its purpose is to provide individuals with the ability to survive while they look for employment. The stipend received from being an election judge is temporary and range from \$100 to \$250. The temporary payment and the amount of the stipend do not have enough to impact for individuals to risk losing their UI benefits. However, the election judge stipend could insert more money into the household and give a temporary financial boost.

HB 261 would allow for people who are currently unemployed and receiving UI benefits to contribute to our states elections without the fear of losing their financial stability. Being an election judge is a civic duty similar to jury duty. There are current protections for jurors and there should be similar protection for election judges.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for HB 261.