

HB1434 Testimony  
Erika Young

Greetings,

I am Erika Whitney Young, Baltimore City resident and community liaison with NewERA Baltimore. I'm speaking in opposition of HB1434, which would take away the right of Marylanders to receive reimbursement of food and cash benefits when a theft occurs and deny valid claims for reimbursement if funding is not available.

It's important that we are mindful and empathetic to the many hardships that put people in a position where they need cash and food benefits. Years ago I was homeless with two small children, escaping a violent marriage. Though I was working, I needed extra help. With the cash allotment, I was able to secure housing, pay my bills, purchase necessities and prepare healthy meals for my children. It created a pathway for financial independence and stability for my family.

But I am concerned that many customers, especially Baltimore City Department of Social Services users are not aware of the reimbursement. I witnessed a clip that played inside all Baltimore City DSS offices that suggested that people experiencing benefit theft notify the police, request a new card and create a stronger passcode. This played from 2022, until it was taken down earlier this year.

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.