

*Sent via Email*

March 21, 2024

Senate Finance Committee  
3 East  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: Advocates Request an Unfavorable Report on House Bill 1434**

Dear Chair Beidle, Chair Guzzone, Members of Finance and Budget and Taxation Committees:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our strong opposition to HB1434. Thanks to the unanimous passage by the Senate of SB 2 last year, current law guarantees that victims of food and cash benefits will be reimbursed whenever a theft of benefits occurs. We oppose HB1434 because it would make reimbursement of benefits “subject to the limitations of the state budget.” Under HB1434, the Department of Human Services (DHS) would not have an obligation to reimburse stolen benefits if no funds were appropriated, or if appropriated funding was exhausted.

Additionally, the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards where benefits are deposited still lack basic security protections. Although DHS put out an RFP for a card vendor to introduce EBT cards with chip technology, DHS predicts it will take at least 18 months. It is critical that Marylanders whose benefits are stolen continue to have the protections provided under current law to receive reimbursement whenever a theft occurs.

HB1434 poses a threat to the protection of individuals and families, 44% of them being children, who rely on food and cash benefits to meet essential needs such as food and shelter. The current law has been working well: DHS has replaced over \$22 million in stolen benefits to over 33,000 households across Maryland.

We respectfully request the Senate Finance and Budget and Taxation Committees to give an **unfavorable report** on HB1434.

Sincerely,

Anne Arundel County Food Bank  
A2theThird, Inc.  
Baltimore Jewish Council  
Camp Fire USA Patuxent Area

CASH Campaign of Maryland  
Catholic Charities  
Civil Advocacy Clinic at the University of Baltimore School of Law  
Cheverly Community Market  
Crossroads Community Food Network  
Department of Planning: Food Policy and Planning Division  
Extend-A-HAND  
Gaithersburg HELP  
Health Care for the Homeless  
Homeless Persons Representation Project  
ImpactHumanity Inc.  
In My Father's House Food Pantry  
League of Women Voters of Maryland  
Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP)  
Maryland Center on Economic Policy  
Maryland Hunger Solutions  
Maryland Legal Aid  
Maryland Latinos Unidos  
Maryland Nonprofits  
Maryland Rise  
Mel 'n Nem Farms  
Mid-County United Ministries  
Prince George's County Food Equity Council  
Public Justice Center  
Rolling Terrace Elementary School  
SecureFOOD, Inc.  
SEED, Inc  
STRIB'ble District LLC ®  
Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op  
The Garden International