



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

January 28, 2025

The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 100
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON HB0187 - CRIMINAL LAW - BENEFITS EXPLOITATION -
POSITION: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide favorable testimony for HB 187.

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, we empower Marylanders to reach their full potential by providing preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities. The Family Investment Administration (FIA) within our department administers a variety of financial assistance programs affected by HB 187.

We believe HB 187 could reduce public benefit theft by creating an additional criminal charge that may deter thieves from exploiting individuals and families we serve. HB 187 would add to the State's efforts to prosecute thieves while we do everything we can to protect our customer's benefits. Among measures we've implemented since we took office is a new system feature enabling customers to lock their Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card while it is not in use. We also increased personal Identification number (PIN) complexity and instituted activity alerts so customers can detect and mitigate potential theft in real time.

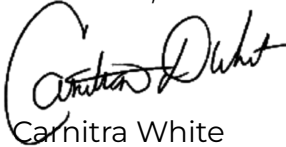
We appreciate the addition of Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP) and Public Assistance to Adults (PAA) to the enumerated list of protected benefits. We disburse these cash assistance benefits on EBT cards. EBT cards are also used for

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which Maryland calls Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

HB 187 clearly identifies as criminal means of achieving theft including through deception, coercion, exploitation, or isolation. The bill could help to prosecute thieves who target Marylanders. Additional and specific protections are necessary because Marylanders rely on cash benefits to pay for groceries to feed their families, keep the lights on, and supplement other monthly expenses.

If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at rachel.sledge@maryland.gov.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carnitra White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Carnitra White
Principal Deputy Secretary