



BILL NO: House Bill 1490
TITLE: **Family Investment Program - Temporary Cash Assistance - Good Cause and Adequate Reason Exceptions**
COMMITTEE: Appropriations
HEARING DATE: March 11, 2026
POSITION: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that works to lead diverse community partners toward the common purpose of reducing the occurrence and impact of intimate partner violence. **MNADV urges the Appropriations Committee to issue a favorable report on HB1490.**

House Bill 1490 would prohibit the Department of Human Services from denying an application or reducing or terminating temporary cash assistance from an individual if the individual has good cause or an adequate reason for noncooperation with child support under certain criteria. Further, it defines the criteria to be used on making the good cause decision and it would require the Child Support Administration (CSA) to make these determinations.

In Maryland, receiving Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) - our state's version of the federal TANF program - comes with a strict legal trade-off regarding child support. By accepting these benefits, the recipient is generally *required* to assign their child support rights to the state so Maryland can recoup the cost of the assistance. HB 1490 would make the process of opting out much safer and easier in the right circumstances. This is a vital necessity for survivors of domestic violence¹.

Under our current framework, for those applying for TCA who have a child or children, the person is required to transfer their right to receive child support to the State of Maryland. Any money the other parent pays goes primarily to the government to "pay back" the TCA received by the custodial parent. Only a small portion (usually \$100–\$200) is "passed through" directly

¹ There is ample research demonstrating the harm to survivors of the requirement to cooperate with the state in these situations. See, for example, <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/19/3/1170>, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jomf.13099>, <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2022.00746>.

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to person seeking aid. The TCA recipient is required to help the Child Support Administration (CSA) locate the other parent and establish a court order. If the recipient refuses without a "good cause" waiver, their benefits can be sanctioned (reduced by 25%).

HB 1490 addresses the danger many survivors face: they need the cash to escape, but cooperating with the state to find the abuser puts their life at risk. The bill simplifies the Good Cause Waiver process in several revolutionary ways:

- **Self-Attestation (No "Paperwork" Barrier):** Historically, survivors had to provide "hard evidence" like police reports or court orders to prove they were in danger. HB 1490 changes this so that a survivor's oral or written statement is sufficient to prove good cause.
- **Third-Party Verification Prohibited:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) cannot require the recipient of the TCA to get a letter from a social worker or a therapist to prove they are afraid.
- **No Contact Rule:** While the state is deciding if the recipient has "good cause," DHS/CSA is strictly prohibited from contacting the noncustodial parent. This prevents the "retaliation" that often happens when an abuser gets a surprise notice from the child support office.

House Bill 1490 would also broaden the definition of good cause, expanding to include situations where cooperation might risk physical or emotional harm to the child or caretaker, discourage the other parent from maintaining the other parent from maintaining a healthy relationship with the child, or simply not be in the "best interest" of the child.

House Bill 1490 turns the child support requirement from a threat into a choice. It recognizes that the state's desire to "get its money back" should never come at the expense of a family's safety. For all of the above reasons, **MNADV strongly urges a favorable report on HB 1490.**