



Public Justice Center
201 North Charles Street, Suite 1200
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
410-625-9409

OPPOSE – HB1331

Thursday, March 19, 2026, 1:00 pm
House Appropriations Committee

MD Department of Health and Department of Human Services - Public Benefits - Eligibility and Prohibitions

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which pursues systemic change for social justice, economic and race equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Our Health and Benefits Equity Project advocates to protect and expand access to healthcare and safety net services for Marylanders struggling to make ends meet. We support policies and practices that are designed to eliminate economic and racial inequities and enable every Marylander to attain their highest level of health. PJC represents individuals and families in administrative appeals and advocacy to accessing critical anti-poverty programs, including Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP), and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). PJC strongly opposes HB1331 because it will make it even harder for eligible individuals and families to access healthcare, food and cash benefit programs in Maryland.

HB1331 will push Marylanders into deeper poverty by terminating healthcare, food, and cash benefits through harsher work requirements and eliminating allowable exemptions.

The federal government has been imposing increasingly harsh work requirements for Medicaid, SNAP, and TCA, yet federal law also permits states to create specific allowable exemptions from each program's work requirements. Federal law signed by President Trump in 2025, creates a Medicaid work requirement and expands the SNAP work requirement by eliminating exemptions for people experiencing homelessness, veterans, and young adults under 24 who aged out of out-of-home care. According to Maryland DHS, HR1's SNAP "work requirement expansions will impose expensive paperwork and red tape on an estimated 79,696 customers to meet and prove their SNAP eligibility."¹ HR1 establishes unprecedented work requirements for the 331,577 Marylanders aged 19 to 65 who receive Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act expansion.² HB1331 exacerbates the impact of HR1 by eliminating Maryland exemptions from work requirements and making it even more difficult for Marylanders to access these lifeline programs. HB1331 would also eliminate the exemptions from the work requirement in the TCA program, for example for single parents caring for a

¹ MD Department of Human Services, "H.R. 1 (2025) Impact on Marylanders: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (August 5, 2025), available at <https://gocpp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/08.05.2025-H.R.-1-2025-Impact-on-SNAP-Slides-FINAL.pdf-1.pdf> at p. 20.

² MD Department of Health, "Impact of Congressional Budget on Maryland Medicaid Program"

newborn, families experiencing homelessness and fleeing domestic violence. HB1331's impact of eliminating allowable exemptions from work requirement will result in increased loss of Medicaid, SNAP, and TCA in Maryland. It is well documented in research that work requirements do not reduce poverty and pushes families deeper into poverty.³

HB1331 relies on false and racist misconceptions to create policies that will terminate benefit eligibility.

HB1331 relies on false and harmful racist assumptions and misconceptions that recipients of public benefits are lazy, undeserving, and not in need of government assistance. Work requirements and behavioral control conditioned on public benefit program eligibility are rooted in oppression and racism.⁴ HB1331 creates even more restrictive work requirements for accessing benefit programs, by prohibiting the Department from exempting individuals from the work requirement unless the individual has a documented disability.⁵ HB1331 unnecessarily removes cash assistance eligibility for immigrants who are lawfully present with humanitarian status, compounding the harm these families will face from losing eligibility for SNAP and Medicaid as a result of HR1. HB1331 prohibits the use of self-attestation for verification of certain eligibility factors, which reinforces the false notion that people accessing public benefits are lying to gain eligibility.⁶ HB1331 proposes increased and unnecessary data sharing, database searches, and reporting that will not only cost MD more resources but will result in eligible individuals being unlawfully terminated and denied from programs due to administrative error and over verification. The proposals under HB1331 will make it even harder for Marylanders who qualify for these benefit programs to receive coverage and approvals. The Department of Legislative Services analysis of the Department of Human Services (DHS) budget observed a stark increase in benefit application denials. Maryland should be focused on strengthening processes for eligible Marylanders to quickly connect with food, healthcare, and income supports, rather than making it even more difficult.

We request that this Committee issue an unfavorable report on HB1331. If you have any questions, please contact Sam Williamson at (410) 625-9409.

³ LaDonna Pavetti, "Work Requirements Don't Cut Poverty, Evidence Shows," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, (June 7, 2016) available at <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/work-requirements-dont-cut-poverty-evidence-shows>.

⁴ See Madison Allen, "Racism in Public Benefit Programs: Where Do We Go From Here?" The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) (July 23, 2020), available at <https://www.clasp.org/blog/racism-public-benefit-programs-where-do-we-go-here/>; see also Ife Floyd, LaDonna Pavetti, Laura Meyer, Ali Safawi, Liz Schott, Evelyn Bellew, and Abigail Magnus, "TANF Policies Reflect Racist Legacy of Cash Assistance," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, (August 4, 2021), available at <https://www.cbpp.org/research/income-security/tanf-policies-reflect-racist-legacy-of-cash-assistance>.

⁵ HB1331 page 9 (C) and (D)(1)-(2).

⁶ HB1331 page 5 at (D).