

Testimony in Support of HB1490
Hearing in the House Appropriations Committee
March 11, 2026

My name is Mya Brown and I support HB1490. I'm a single mom, an advocate, and a survivor of domestic violence, and I'm a resident of Baltimore City. I'm not currently receiving TCA, but I received it 2024 through 2025 when I was fleeing domestic violence. I came to Maryland and stayed at House of Ruth shelter. I depended on TCA, I had no income. I was fearful to even sign up for the benefits I needed because my ex was stalking me and following me. We needed money to survive, to get enough food for myself and my child. You need to apply for TCA before you can access the shelters and get housing, but I couldn't get it for over 3 months. That kept us in the shelter- it wasn't just TCA I couldn't get, it kept me from other benefits too.

I was told to apply for TCA online, but there was no one to help me. I didn't really know how to use the online system and it was stressful to apply. The TCA application asks you for proof that you applied for child support, but my child was conceived with IVF and there's no way to for me to apply for child support in this situation. If you answer that you're not receiving child support, you need to provide proof you applied or they won't accept your application. The DSS employee didn't understand the IVF paperwork and didn't accept it, telling me they would only accept child support paperwork. I didn't even know how to get that! I thought the child support office was in the same building, but I had to go all the way to Hunt Valley to get the paperwork.

The requirement to apply for child support totally stopped my TCA application for months. It also held up my SNAP application since I applied for them together. I was traveling from the city to the county every day to try and work this out. I had to pay for a cab from Dundalk to the child support office in Hunt Valley, and make it back to Dundalk before DSS closed, just to get them the proof they asked for- and I shouldn't have been made to do that! I was eligible for this exemption that they never once told me about. When I had to apply for benefits in DC, it was right there on the application, a box you can check if you're fleeing domestic violence and can't apply for child support. In Maryland, though, no one told me this was an option.

They judge everyone the same, but everyone's situation is different. My ex stalked me all the way from New York, I wasn't safe. He was following me, he had my information. That's why I fled to Maryland- I found the address for a shelter and I just ran. I told them this but they never told me anything about a good cause exemption. Domestic violence is the whole reason I was in this situation- they ask on the application why you're in the shelter, and I told them I was fleeing for my life, but I was never told about the exemption.

This bill HB1490 will help people in my situation fleeing domestic violence. Accessing TCA is what helped me get out of the shelter and into permanent housing- four months after I finally got

the paperwork done, I was able to get an apartment. I could have done it sooner if I had the protections this bill offers. Any time I was outside, I was afraid and at risk from my ex- people in this situation shouldn't be forced to put themselves at risk to get the help they need. I hope sharing my story will help raise awareness about situations like mine so anyone fleeing domestic violence can get the help they need without these obstacles. Please vote yes on HB 1490. Thank you.