



March 11, 2026

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1490
Family Investment Program – Temporary Cash Assistance – Good Cause and
Adequate Reason Exceptions**

House Appropriations Committee

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Kaiser, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1490 - expanding “good cause” and adequate reasons for exemptions for individuals applying for Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) who are also required to pay child support.

Maryland Hunger Solutions is a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to end hunger, improve nutrition and promote the well-being of Marylanders by maximizing participation in federal nutrition programs, addressing root causes of hunger and advocating for permanent solutions upending hunger and poverty. We strive to overcome existing barriers to state and federal nutrition assistance programs and create self-sustaining connections for low-income Maryland residents experiencing food insecurity.

Maryland Hunger Solutions conducts robust Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach across the state providing direct application assistance to any Marylander seeking to apply for SNAP. We are able to assist low-income residents experiencing food security by offering one-on-one support to complete applications, help gather required documentation, troubleshoot case issues, and navigate mid-certification (MBR) and redetermination (renewal) processes. Our goal as an organization is to reduce barriers to enrollment and help ensure individuals and families can access the food assistance they need in a timely manner.

Across Maryland, as families and households are experiencing growing and increasingly complex needs, many are struggling to navigate rising food costs, escalating housing expenses, higher utility bills, and childcare costs all of which continue to outpace wages. At the same time, changes to eligibility rules and administrative requirements for many federal programs are creating a new uncertainty for households that are already struggling.

TCA (federally known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or TANF) is designed to provide temporary financial assistance and a pathway toward stability for families experiencing economic hardship. In Maryland, more than 38,000 families are receiving assistance with an average of \$318 per month. For many low-income households, TCA represents not only immediate relief during a difficult period but also an opportunity to rebuild financial security, maintain housing stability, and support the well-being of children.



Maryland Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger and promoting well-being

Policies that recognize the complex financial realities families face are essential to ensuring that TCA fulfills this purpose.

For applicants who are already required to pay child support, the current rules can unintentionally create barriers to accessing the very support systems designed to help families stabilize their finances. Without reasonable “good cause” exemptions, individuals may be placed in situations where meeting child support obligations while navigating unemployment, underemployment, or other economic challenges makes it difficult to qualify for or fully benefit from TCA assistance.

HB 1490 will clarify and standardize the process for granting good cause to not cooperate with child support and reduce inequities by:

- Clarifying the Department of Social Services (DSS) is the agency that grants good cause (not the child support agency)
- Limiting DSS caseworker discretion to deny good cause
- Giving parents more choice and autonomy to determine whether pursuing child support is in their family’s best interest
- Requiring DSS to notify families about good cause and how to obtain it

HB 1490 also codifies and expands Maryland’s good cause exemptions to not cooperate with child support, including:

- Safety and domestic violence concerns
- Child conceived from incest or rape
- Pending adoption proceedings
- If filing for child support risks discouraging non-custodial parent from their relationship with their child, providing emotional or other support

Expanding good cause exemptions acknowledges these realities and allows the program to better serve families during periods of financial instability. By providing flexibility in circumstances where strict requirements may create hardship, the policy helps ensure that parents can access the support they need to regain stability, seek employment, and contribute meaningfully to their households and their children’s well-being.

When families are given the opportunity to stabilize their finances, they are better positioned to meet their responsibilities over the long term. Policies that support economic stability ultimately strengthen families, reduce long-term reliance on assistance, and promote healthier outcomes for children.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1490.