

**HB1490**  
**Family Investment Program - Temporary Cash Assistance - Good Cause and Adequate Reason**  
**Exceptions**

Appropriations Committee

March 11, 2026

**Support**

**Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports HB1490.** This bill will prohibit the Department of Human Services (DHS) from denying an application or reducing benefits if the individual has good cause or an adequate reason for noncooperation with child support requirements. The aim of this bill is to allow parents to make the best and safest choice for their family by clarifying and strengthening existing regulations related to the requirement that Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) participants file a child support order. **HB1490 will prevent parents from losing access to TCA, because of valid reasons for not pursuing child support.**

For over a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities.

As the largest private provider of human services in Maryland, **Catholic Charities' Head Start programs** serve over **800 children** and **700 families**. The 12 sites focus on supporting children and families from low-income households through all aspects of life to improve children's success in school and later in life. Our staff work closely with families to understand their circumstances and help them navigate and improve their situations. **Access to TCA is one of the resources that helps families meet basic needs**, allowing essentials such as rent and electricity to be covered while parents actively work to improve their children's lives by participating in Head Start parent programming.

**For some families, their lived experiences make pursuing child support harmful to themselves and their children.** However, the need for financial assistance still exists. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's 36<sup>th</sup> annual report found in Maryland, 11% of children are living in poverty. Children should not be denied financial supports like TCA because of the circumstances into which they were born. According to the Joint Chairmen's Report, in April 2024, 74% of TCA applications were denied by DHS. Of those denials, 548 families were denied assistance due to noncooperation with child support requirements. These are families who applied for assistance to meet their basic needs but did not feel safe or able to pursue child support.

By strengthening good cause exemptions, parents will be able to make decisions in the best interest of the child and take a step in the direction of reducing childhood poverty and improving their child's current and future lives.

**For these reasons, Catholic Charities of Baltimore urges the committee to issue a favorable report for Bill HB1490.**

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy on behalf of Sarah Katvala, Advocacy Fellow.