



HB 191 - Consumer Protection - Retail Transactions - Cash Payments
House Economic Matters Committee
February 10, 2026
SUPPORT

Chair Valderrama, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 191. This bill requires certain businesses to accept cash as a form of payment and protects unbanked and underbanked consumers who are more likely to use cash.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

HB 191 requires certain businesses to accept cash as a form of payment, ensuring that unbanked and underbanked Marylanders are not excluded from accessing everyday goods and services. This bill is a necessary consumer protection that promotes equity, financial inclusion, and economic fairness for low-income individuals and families across the state.

Despite the growing use of electronic payments, cash remains a critical tool for millions of households. The 2023 FDIC National Survey of Unbanked and Underbanked Households reports that 5.6 million (4.2%) households in the U.S. are unbanked, or do not have a bank account.¹ In Maryland, this drops, only slightly, to 2.4%.¹ For this report and several previous reports, "Don't have enough money to meet minimum balance requirements" was the most common response when asked why people do not have a bank account.¹

For unbanked individuals, navigating daily financial life is significantly more expensive. Fees accumulate at every turn: check-cashing fees to access wages, money order fees to pay rent or utilities, and higher costs or outright exclusion from credit, loans, and safe savings tools. Businesses that refuse cash payments ask low income customers to increase this burden by expecting them to pay additional fees for "pay-as-you-go" or similar cards just to be able to purchase goods or services.

Through our work with clients, CASH knows that people with an income lower than \$20,000 a year are more likely to have less access to traditional banking. Furthermore, the rates of unbanked are several times higher among Black and Brown households in comparison to their white counterparts.¹ An outright ban on cash discriminates against those without credit or bank accounts, likely those who are low-income, homeless, or undocumented.

¹ FDIC. (2023). <https://www.fdic.gov/household-survey>



This bill protects consumers, promotes fairness, and helps ensure Maryland's economy works for everyone. A cashless payment can be one option among many, but it should never be the sole option.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for HB 191.

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope