

**House Bill 191 – Consumer Protection – Retail Transactions – Cash
Payments
Hearing on April 1, 2026 – Senate Finance Committee
Position: FAVORABLE**

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits its written and oral testimony on HB 191 in response to a request from Delegate Greg Wims.

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of this vital legislation. We are the state’s largest nonprofit law firm, representing thousands of low-income Marylanders every year in civil legal cases involving a wide range of issues, including family law, housing, public benefits, consumer law, housing, and employment. Because HB 191 prohibits retailers from refusing to accept cash or from charging fees for accepting cash for in-person retail transactions for less than \$300, MLA testifies in strong support of this bill.

At MLA we see that many of our clients use cash for small purchases. Over 80% of those households making less than \$75,000.00 a year in 2024 reported using cash to make purchases in 2024, and the average amount spent to make those cash purchases was \$253¹. If retailers and merchants are permitted to begin to add fees to process these cash payments, this could add even more additional costs to low-income Marylanders, who are already disproportionately harmed by other fees such as bank overdraft fees².

One example of this is several years ago, MLA represented a client in a Chapter 13 bankruptcy. This client was living on her own making less than \$700 per month. Her home went into foreclosure because her son, who was assisting her, died while serving in the military in Iraq. Despite her economic shortcomings, she was able to make her Trustee payment of less than \$300 for several years³. However, all she had was cash, and MLA had to assist this client in going to the bank or to a convenience store every month to convert these cash payments into money orders that she could send to her mortgage company and to the Trustee. If HB 191 did not pass, low-income, elderly citizens such as this woman in the future may have to go through this arduous process for everything that they have to buy. HB 191 would make sure that this would never happen in Maryland.

Because this bill would protect MLA’s clients ability to use cash for small purchases, MLA gives strong support to HB 191. If you need additional information regarding this bill, please

¹ <https://www.atlantafed.org/banking-and-payments/consumer-payments/survey-and-diary-of-consumer-payment-choice/2024-survey-and-diary#Tab2>.

² <https://www.nclc.org/congress-move-to-overturn-overdraft-fee-rule-would-block-relief-for-families-living-paycheck-to-paycheck/>

³ She did not have a mortgage payment because she had a home equity conversion (HECM) mortgage.

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