

House Bill 559
Family Investment Administration - Temporary Cash Assistance - Funding

House Appropriations Committee
February 18, 2020

Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports HB 559, which increases the appropriation for the Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program by requiring the Governor to provide funds in the budget to ensure that the value of TCA, combined with federal food stamps, reaches 71% of the State Minimum Living level by FY 2026.

Inspired by the gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. As the largest human service provider in Maryland working with tens of thousands of Marylanders each year, and an employer of over 2,000 people, we recognize the dignity of each individual and believe everyone should have a basic standard of living.

Each day, Catholic Charities staff work with families on TCA as they face challenges and difficulties building financial security on such a limited income. We house TCA recipients who are staying at our family homeless shelters in Anne Arundel and Harford Counties, we work with families on TCA in our Head Start programs in Baltimore City, Carroll County, and Harford County, and we assist TCA parents in securing work through our St. Edwards Workforce Development Program in Baltimore. While it's a vitally important safety net program, the TCA benefit amount is far too low to truly help families build the economic stability they need in order to move out of poverty.

HB 559 is a step in the right direction to raise our TCA benefits to an amount closer to the Maryland Minimum Living Level. Bringing TCA from 61% of the Maryland Minimum Living Level (MLL) – when combined with SNAP – to 71% of the Maryland MLL directly infuses income into the household budgets of families living in deep poverty. Families use TCA benefits to purchase housing, food, transportation, and other basic necessities. These funds are immediately spent in the local economy, generating economic growth for the state as a whole. Most importantly, increasing the benefit amount will allow families to have a greater financial stability, which can assist in locating work, moving off of TCA permanently, and building a secure future.

It is a moral imperative – particularly in the wealthiest state in the country – to bring our TCA benefit to a level that provides a more livable income. Families shouldn't have to choose which basic needs to forgo, or have to raise their children in homeless shelters.

On behalf of TCA families and all the individuals we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 559.

Submitted By: Regan K. Vaughan, Director of Advocacy