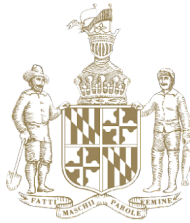


STEPHANIE SMITH
Legislative District 45
Baltimore City

Appropriations Committee

House Chair
Baltimore City Delegation



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB447: Human Services- CASH Campaign- Annual Appropriation

Bill Hearing: February 8th, 2021 at 1:00pm, Appropriations Committee

Chairwoman Maggie McIntosh and Vice Chair Mark S. Chang,

Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the lives of Marylanders in ways we could not have foreseen. Unfortunately, as is common with many tragedies of this scale, the pandemic has impacted low-income communities and communities of color even more drastically than those that possess higher means- not only in terms of health, but in terms of financial disaster.

While these low-income, hard-working communities fight to gain or maintain financial security in the midst of unprecedented circumstances, they also continue to be taxed further into poverty. The broadened federal and state tax credit expansions and stimulus payments have increased the demand for free tax prep services. With these needs in mind, I have introduced HB447 to expand access to free tax prep and outreach through the CASH Campaign of Maryland.

CASH, which stands for “Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope,” exists to promote economic advancement for families in these communities. In the fall of 2021, CASH received its first installment of the funds, enabling it to buffer the increased costs of offering free tax preparation remotely and using COVID safety measures through PPE, social distancing, and Plexiglas. CASH increased its funding to partners from \$127,040 in 2020 to \$160,000 in 2021. Because of this investment, CASH was more prepared to make quick investments to pivot to remote service delivery due to the pandemic, extend outreach for stimulus and tax credit programs, and extend services beyond the typical tax season. CASH provides funding to partners in 14-19 counties in

any given year. Many of these counties would not have a tax program at all without CASH's investment and technical assistance. CASH has engaged new partners that serve incarcerated individuals and their families, immigrant households, faith-based communities, and rideshare drivers.

According to CASH's 2021 Final Report of Statewide Data, the organization has been able to:

- Establish 31 VITA sites statewide, 12 in Baltimore alone
- Assist 15,500 Maryland citizens in filing federal tax returns
- Log 24,564 volunteer hours, through 334 volunteers
- Save \$3 million in tax preparation fees
- Raise total state and federal refunds for Maryland citizens from \$10 million to \$24 million

In 2022, CASH is set to provide \$230,000 to partners. This bill seeks to increase this amount to \$500,000 beginning in fiscal year 2024. Now more than ever, as Marylanders' financial struggles continue to grow, it is our duty as state legislators to ensure that our most vulnerable communities are provided with the assistance necessary to achieve and maintain economic stability.

I urge you to vote favorably on HB0447.

Sincerely,

Delegate Stephanie M. Smith