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House Bill 1043 – Family Investment Program – Eligibility, Work Experience, Community Service, and Reports - Alterations

Appropriations Committee

March 10, 2022

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Background: House Bill 1043, (HB1043) would allow the Department of Human Services to have more flexibility, (within Federal guidelines) to administer the Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program. These flexibilities would include codifying that 30-hours is a minimum standard work week, streamlining the work verification paperwork, re-working the Work Experience program so that TCA recipients have more/better choices in the employment placement, and codifying that families who are new to TCA can have up to 12 months to stabilize before joining a work placement.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore and all of its agencies, including Jewish Community Services (JCS), which provides social services to low-income Marylanders. Maryland has one of the highest rates of Deep Poverty in the country, with almost 50% of those living in poverty, living in deep poverty. It is these individuals and families who receive public benefits such as TCA. TCA, while a vital safety-net for those living in deep poverty, has not created a means to get out of poverty. TCA was created to help those in need receive job skills to pull them out poverty, by requiring residents to participate in federally defined work activities. However, the program has not created these outcomes. In fact, 80% of TCA recipients five years after receiving TCA are still living in poverty.

HB1043 will improve TCA outcomes, especially around the work programs. The strict work requirement was created by racist and classist ideas about families living in poverty. Many of the work program placements are unpaid (WEX), with no opportunity to gain employment after the placement. It is these WEX programs that have to lowest rate of secure employment after completion, and for those that do find employment, they have the lowest earnings. HB1043 would encourage the state to partner with better skills building programs that would give better opportunities to TCA participants.

Additionally, HB1043 would make federally permissible changes to the work requirements of TCA participants, including changing the state's 40-hour week requirement, and codifying the 30-hour minimum under federal law. It would also allow for families to have more flexibility by exempting the work requirements for the first 12 months of receiving the benefit, and also allowing for an exemption for those caring for a child under 12 months. For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Councils asks for a favorable report on HB1043.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

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