



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

Lowe House Office Building, 6 Bladen Street, Room 200 · Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Phone 410-841-3374 | 301-858-3374 · 800-492-7122 Ext. 3374 · Fax 410-841-3342 | 301-858-3342
latino.caucus@house.state.md.us · www.mdlatinocaucus.org

DAVID FRASER-HIDALGO, CHAIR
JOSELINE A. PEÑA-MELNYK, VICE-CHAIR
GABRIEL ACEVERO, TREASURER
JESSE T. PIPPY, SECRETARY
MADELIN MARTINEZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
Delegate Mark S. Chang, Vice Chair
Appropriations Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

DATE: February 15, 2023

RE: HB0160/SB0160 Human Services – Temporary Cash Assistance – Calculation of Benefits

The MLLC [supports] HB0160/SB0160 Human Services – Temporary Cash Assistance – Calculation of Benefits

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB0160/SB0168.

Currently, the Department of Human Services reduces a family's TCA benefit by \$60 when the family lives in subsidized housing.¹ Low-income families should not be punished for accessing more than one safety net program. That \$60 reduction in TCA is equivalent to families losing up to 10% of their possible maximum benefit, sending already vulnerable families into a deeper cycle of poverty.² Maryland is the 9th most expensive state to live in; even when families receive both TCA and a housing subsidy, most are still living well below the federal poverty line. Additionally, less than 10 states have practices similar to Maryland's, and most states, including all of Maryland's neighbors, do not participate in this practice.³ Maryland should align with the practices of the majority of states, allowing for families to stimulate the local economy by being able to spend more at their local businesses and boosting general economic activity.⁴

13.5% of Hispanic or Latino Marylanders in Maryland lived below the poverty line as of 2018.⁵ According to the University of Maryland School of Social Work, one of the biggest blocs of Marylanders who receive temporary cash assistance are members of the Latino Community. Specifically, in April 2020, approximately 61% of Hispanics reported that they or someone in their household experienced job or wage loss because of COVID-19.⁶ In May 2020, 44% of Hispanics indicated they could not pay some of their bills or could only make partial payments.⁷

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Jefferson, S., & Quinlan, M. (2020). (rep.). *2020 Maryland Poverty Profiles*. Marylanders Against Poverty. http://mapadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Maryland-Poverty-Profiles_2020-FINAL.pdf.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Now more than ever, an extra \$60 a month to Latino families in Maryland could go a long way in helping the community recover from the pandemic.⁸

This bill prohibits the reduction of Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) benefits simply because a family lives in subsidized housing, thereby moving Maryland's TCA program in an anti-racist direction by removing unnecessary financial penalties.⁹ By providing extra funds for families who need it, Maryland can put a dent in child poverty and ease pain in this state and national housing crisis. This bill will allow families \$60 per month to purchase food, transportation, utilities, and meet other basic needs.¹⁰

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB0168/SB0160.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Madaio, M., & Klingemaier, L. (2023). *Support HB 168 / SB 160*. Annapolis, Maryland.

¹⁰ Ibid.