



Testimony Concerning HB 168
“Human Services – Temporary Cash Assistance – Calculation of Benefits”
Submitted to the House Appropriations Committee
January 31, 2023

Position: Support

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports HB 168, which requires the Department of Human Services to end the practice of reducing Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) benefits if the TCA recipient also receives housing assistance.

MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the availability, affordability, and quality of child care, family support services, and early education. We have been active in state and federal debates on education and welfare reform and are strongly committed to ensuring that low- and moderate-income working families—and indeed, all families—have the supports they need to care for their children and to be economically self-sufficient.

The majority of recipients of TCA are children. 70% of cases have school-age kids (6-18 years), and 55% of cases have children age 5 or younger. In FY 2022, there were an average of 29,022 child recipients of TCA in Maryland.

Poverty has a devastating impact on families, and especially on young children. The children’s physical health, social and emotional development, school readiness, and ultimate life outcomes face severe challenges. Deep poverty—often defined as living with income at less than half the federal poverty level, or approximately \$11,500 for a family of 3—exacerbates these challenges greatly. Even a modest increase in income for these families has been demonstrated by the National Institutes of Health (among others) to result in significantly better outcomes for individuals and for society as a whole.

Halting the practice of reducing benefits would put more money in the budgets of low-income families.

MFN urges your favorable consideration of HB 168.