



Testimony in Support of House Bill 339

Family Investment Program - Temporary Cash Assistance - Funding

TO: Chair McIntosh and Members of the House Appropriations Committee
FROM: Demaune Millard, President & CEO, Family League of Baltimore
DATE: February 12, 2019

Family League of Baltimore (Family League) supports House Bill 339 which slowly raises Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) to 71% of the Maryland Minimum Living Level, when combined with SNAP benefits, over the course of 5 years. To be eligible to receive TCA, your income cannot be more than 120% above the maximum benefit level; if the benefit level is increased, more families living in deep poverty will qualify for benefits. To continue receiving TCA, your income cannot be more than 140% above the maximum benefit level. The increase in benefit level through HB 339 will allow families to receive Temporary Cash Assistance until their incomes are at a higher level.

Baltimore City families participating in Maryland's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program rely on TCA when other forms of assistance (i.e., Food Supplement Program, WIC, etc.) do not fully meet their needs. TCA beneficiaries must meet a range of eligibility requirements, including maintaining employment, cooperating with child support obligations, and complying with various substance abuse provisions¹. TCA recipients are often employed at very low wages and rely on this income supplement to pay rent and to buy personal hygiene products and clothes.

TCA has been proven to lift children and families out of poverty, but it is not currently meeting the need. In Maryland, over 70% of TCA recipients are children. The average adult recipient is an African-American (74%) woman (91%) in her early 30s, has never been married (80%) but has at least a high school diploma (67%).² Adult recipients are required to be in a work activity while receiving TCA, but once they start earning income, their TCA benefit is decreased by \$0.60 for every \$1 earned until the benefit level is zero. Families leave TCA before they are making a family-sustaining income. Increasing TCA will help parents transition more smoothly back into the workforce.

As the designated Local Management Board for the City of Baltimore, Family League's mission is to serve as an architect of change by promoting data-driven, collaborative initiatives and aligning resources to create lasting outcomes for children, families and communities. This work is guided by the State's Child Well-being Results Areas. We support HB 339 in particular due to its alignment with these result areas by working to ensure that "Children are Healthy" and "Families are Safe and Economically Stable."³ Increasing the TCA

¹ Department of Human Services. <http://dhr.maryland.gov/weathering-tough-times/temporary-cash-assistance/>

² *Life After Welfare Report: 2017 Annual Update*. Letitia Logan Passarella and Lisa Thiebaud Nicoli. <http://www.familywelfare.umaryland.edu/reports/life2017.pdf> pg. i

³ Maryland Governor's Office for Children. "Maryland's Child Well-Being Scorecard." <https://goc.maryland.gov/reportcard/>

benefit amount will allow families to have greater financial stability, which can assist in locating work, moving off of TCA permanently, and building long-term economic security.

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