



Testimony in Support of House Bill 786

Department of Human Services, Maryland Department of Health, and Department of Education – Easing Access to Family Support Programs

TO: Chair McIntosh and Members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Demaune A. Millard, President & CEO, Family League of Baltimore

DATE: February 10, 2021

Family League of Baltimore (Family League) supports House Bill 786 as it would establish a policy to alleviate administrative hurdles for low-income families seeking access to support programs. House Bill 786 would require the Department of Human Services, Maryland Department of Health, and Maryland Department of Education to take certain steps to achieve the policy goal and work in concert to simplify the application process for family support programs.

Ensuring that such measures are in place could increase efficiencies for families seeking assistance from state agencies while potentially helping to ease the anxiety and emotional stress they are already experiencing. Currently, families and individuals have to complete separate applications for each family support program. This bill would applicants to be automatically enrolled in other available programs one they are accepted into one. This could remove potential barriers for families by cutting down on the amount of time spent taking off from work when traveling to different agencies to complete the applications. Additionally, the current applications are confusing and time consuming, possibly leading to incomplete or denied applications even though applying families and individuals may qualify.

This bill is not requiring that the determining factors change, but instead it is focused on providing simpler application access to families and individuals in need. Applicants often become discouraged because of the challenges to accessibility presented by the lack of coordination between agencies or provision of ways to apply for support. Placing the applications on the department websites and providing ready access to physical applications at each of these departments is also a way to ease the access for applying. With the passage of HB 786, families and individuals would be able focus on their work and family because they will be able to receive the support needed without the current administrative hurdles that are in place.

As the designated Local Management Board for the City of Baltimore, Family League works collaboratively to support data-informed, community-driven solutions to align resources to dismantle systemic barriers that limit the possibilities for children, families, and communities. Our policy advocacy work is also guided by and in support of the Governor's Office Of Crime Prevention Youth And Victim Services' [Results for Child Well-Being](#). Through our Strategic Planning Process, we have prioritized three of these results areas, focusing on the success of Baltimore City's children in school; the economic stability of families; and the safety of communities for children, youth, and families. We support HB 786 in particular because of its alignment with work to ensure that "Families are Safe and Economically Stable."

For more information contact Keontae Kells, Public Policy Assistant kkells@familyleague.org.

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