



### **Member Agencies:**

Advocates for Children and Youth  
Baltimore Jewish Council  
CASA of Maryland Inc.  
Catholic Charities  
Energy Advocates  
Episcopal Community Services  
Health Care for the Homeless  
Homeless Persons  
Representation Project  
Interfaith Works  
Jewish Community Relations Council  
of Greater Washington  
Job Opportunities Task Force  
League of Women Voters of Maryland  
Maryland Budget & Tax Policy Institute  
Maryland CASH Campaign  
Maryland Catholic Conference  
Maryland Community Action  
Partnership  
Maryland Family Network  
Maryland Hunger Solutions  
Maryland Interfaith  
Legislative Committee  
National Council on Alcoholism & Drug  
Dependence – Maryland Chapter  
Public Justice Center  
St. Vincent de Paul Society  
United Way of Central Maryland  
Welfare Advocates

### **Maryland Alliance for the Poor**

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## **MAP Legislative & Budget Interests**

### **Successes**

#### **HB 79/SB 678 – Commercial Law – Credit Services Businesses – Limitation on Fees (AKA “PAY DAY LOANS”)**

***MAP supported this bill and it passed.***

The Pay Day loan bill retains Maryland’s 33 percent rate cap on loans by prohibiting credit service companies from charging fees that when combined with interest exceed 33%. Payday lending creates a vicious cycle of debt for consumers who are already financially distressed. Maryland now joins the ranks of fifteen other states and the District of Columbia to prohibit high-cost payday lending.

#### **HB 91/SB 107 – Unemployment Insurance Modernization and Tax Relief Act**

***MAP supported this bill. It passed with amendments that responded to concerns of business interests and was signed into law by Governor O’Malley on March 25, 2010.***

This modernization of the unemployment insurance benefits program provides a safety net for Maryland’s most vulnerable workers. 200,000 out-of-work Marylanders are struggling to meet their most basic needs. The federal government has passed legislation encouraging states to modernize their unemployment insurance (UI) systems and help more residents who have been laid off and are unable to find work.

In exchange for nearly \$127 million in federal incentive funds, Maryland made three changes to its UI system. The new law:

- Creates an Alternative Base Period (ABP), which provides coverage to workers who are currently denied benefits due to an outdated data collection system that ignores recent work. ABP is estimated to provide \$16.5 million per year in benefits to workers who would otherwise be denied.
- Makes slight technical amendments to the state’s existing part-time worker provision.
- Provides an additional 26 weeks of benefits to individuals participating in a state-approved training program for high-demand careers.

### **HB 343 Public Benefits – Requirement of Proof of Lawful Presence**

***MAP opposed this bill and it failed.***

HB 343, the aim of which was to prevent undocumented immigrants from accessing public benefits for which they are ineligible, would have had much broader implications for Marylanders in need. Maryland's local Departments of Social Services are currently under incredible strain. Caseworkers have many times the caseload they can comfortably handle, waiting rooms are full on a daily basis, and applicants are experiencing delays in receiving the benefits they qualify for. Passage of HB 343 would have added to this strain. Beyond the administrative impact, the bill would also have had the impact of denying benefits to U.S. citizens and lawful immigrants. Many people living in poverty – especially those who are homeless – have difficulty in accessing the birth certificates and other documentation necessary to prove lawful presence.

### **HB 350/SB 758 Education - Early Learning Challenge Fund – Applications for Grants**

***MAP supported this bill and it passed.***

This no-cost legislation reflects Maryland's longstanding commitment to expanding high quality early education opportunities for children from economically disadvantaged families. This legislation will help make significant progress toward that goal. This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to compete for a federal grant from the Early Learning Challenge Fund and take necessary steps to ensure that the grant application is as strong as possible. To that end, this bill requires MSDE to prepare to address criteria that the Federal Department of Education will consider in its grant evaluations.

### **HB 693/SB 527 - Health and Human Services Referral Board - 2-1-1 Maryland – Modifications**

***MAP supported this bill and it passed.***

2-1-1 Maryland is a toll free information and referral services operating 24 hours a day/7 days a week. It currently operates as a pilot program; however this bill makes it a permanent program and establishes a governing structure. 2-1-1 Maryland is a single point of entry into the vast number of health and human services here in Maryland. There is an incredible amount of programs and services here in Maryland aimed at helping low income Marylanders. Navigating the system and finding these programs and services however can be quite difficult and frustrating and oftentimes, programs go under-utilized because people simply do not know where the programs exist. This bill would ensure that low income residents of Maryland are able to access programs and services and what easier way than by dialing a three digit free number – 2-1-1.

### **HB 731 Human Services – Program Modifications**

***MAP opposed this bill and it failed.***

HB 731 would have made significant modifications in public assistance programs that would have lead to overly restrictive work, job training and income eligibility requirements. MAP supports initiatives that assist vulnerable Marylanders in achieving self-sufficiency, however the reforms outlined in this bill would have stalled progress rather than encouraged it.

### **HB 746/SB 845 Procurement-Living Wage- Repeal**

***MAP opposed this bill and it failed.***

HB 746/SB 845 would have repealed the requirement that employers working on state procurement contracts pay a living wage to their employees. If passed, this would have been a major set-back to workers trying to support themselves and their families; especially during these volatile economic times. The aim of a living wage requirement is to lift the lowest-paid workers out of poverty. Requiring employers to pay those

who work on state contracts at a minimum of \$11.30 per hour means that a full time employee earns slightly above \$22,000/year - barely enough to provide for the basic human needs of a family.

### **HB 830/SB 318 Income Tax Check-off for Developmental Disabilities**

***MAP supported this bill and it passed.***

This bill establishes an income tax check-off system for voluntary contributions to the Waiting List Equity Fund (WLEF) for services to individuals with developmental disabilities. The measure requires the Comptroller to collect and account for contributions made through the income tax check-off system and to credit the proceeds to the Fund after deducting the amount necessary to administer the check-off system. The WLEF provides critical community based services to individuals who are eligible for but not receiving services from the Developmental Disabilities Administration.

### **HB 1135 Property Tax Credit – Grocery Stores- Low Income Areas**

***MAP supported this bill and it passed.***

This measure authorizes local jurisdictions to offer a property tax credit to grocery stores in low-income areas. Studies show that food stores in low-income areas tend to be small shops that do not offer the same variety of goods as larger supermarkets. Often it is fresh, nutritious food that is not available. This is a health concern as the CDC reports poor nutrition can lead to obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and some types of cancer.

In addition to being a health issue, the lack of full scale grocery stores in low-income areas is also an economic issue. Far too often, individuals travel to supermarkets in other areas and are faced with paying transportation costs and a time consuming trip especially if they are using public transportation. Buying food becomes yet another barrier to moving out of poverty.

### **SB 232 Property Tax Credit - Homestead Tax Credit - Extension to Second Property**

***MAP opposed this bill and it failed.***

Tax policy should promote equity and fairness and should be evaluated in proportion to the benefits received, including the impact on lower-income people. SB232 would have allowed a homeowner to claim the credit for a second dwelling as long as it was at least 90 miles from the first dwelling. With the current budget deficits that the state is facing, the loss of revenue to the state that a tax credit on second homes would provide is inappropriate when a revenue shortage is preventing adequate funding for many important programs. Second homes are a luxury and should not be subsidized by the state when the revenue from the total assessments on those homes is a small but needed source of revenue.

### **Budget - Service Linked Housing Program**

***MAP opposed the elimination of funding for this program and funding was partially restored.***

The budget as originally proposed did not include any funding for the Service-Linked Housing Program (SLHP). SLHP provides funds in thirteen jurisdictions for resident advocates to link low-income residents of permanent housing to community services. As a result of the advocacy efforts of MAP and its member organizations, \$550,000 (50% of the FY'09 funding level) was appropriated for this program.

### **Budget - No Wrong Door Project – Single Point of Access to Social Services Benefits**

***MAP supported this budget language and it was approved.***

The language requires that the Department of Human Resources (DHR), in consultation with the Advisory Board for Maryland Access Point, convene a committee comprised of representatives from DHR; the

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the Maryland Department of Aging; the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation; the Department of Disabilities; and the Maryland State Department of Education, local departments of social services representatives, state elected officials, community organizations and advocates to investigate and recommend legislation, policies, procedures and technologies to deliver public assistance and in-kind assistance timely, accurately, efficiently, and in a manner that enhances customer dignity and community-based access. The committee must report back to the legislature on their findings.

### **Budget - Employment and Training**

***MAP supported this funding, and the legislature did not accept the full amount of cuts proposed by legislative fiscal staff.***

Within the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulations' Workforce Development budget the House cut \$117,000 more deeply than the Senate into youth employment programs, and eliminated a program to assist foreign-trained nurses (\$100,000). In the end, the conference committee approved the House cut to youth employment but restored the nursing program.

## **Unfinished Business**

### **HB 175/SB 312 Labor and Employment – Credit Reports and Credit Histories of Applicants and Employees – Limitations on Use by Employers**

***MAP supported this bill and it failed.***

This measure had the potential to increase access to much-needed employment opportunities for low-income Marylanders by limiting employers' use of credit checks in the hiring process. (Positions with a fiduciary responsibility were exempt.)

About 60% of employers use credit history checks as a tool in their pre-employment screening, even if the information has no relation to the job. In these trying economic times, many Marylanders are experiencing financial hardship, which negatively impacts their credit. It's a vicious cycle that begins when individuals lose their jobs, fall behind on their bills, and have their credit damaged. They are then denied new employment opportunities because of their tarnished credit.

Despite the fact that there is no data to show a correlation between bad credit and one's likelihood to commit fraud on the job, the legislation failed after receiving unfavorable committee reports from Senate Finance (6-5) and House Economic Matters (15-6).

### **HB 419/SB 759 Early Child Care & Education Enhancement Program – Annual Report**

***MAP supported this bill and it failed.***

The Maryland State Department of Education currently submits an annual report on the 24 Judy Hoyer Centers and Enhancement Grants, which provide early education and special education from birth through kindergarten to low-income children in 21 jurisdictions in Maryland. House Bill 419 would have expanded that report to include the programs that participate in Judy Hoyer initiatives, including pre-K, Head Start, Infants and Toddlers, family support services, and child care programs. This bill could have helped Maryland monitor the progress and results in early childhood education and strengthen Maryland's chances of receiving money through federal grants (while not causing the State to incur any costs). Federal grants demand strong accountability and this bill would have created a more comprehensive report on the state of

early care and education in Maryland. This bill passed the Senate and received a favorable vote in House Ways & Means, however, it failed on the final day of session.

### **HB 755 Earned Income Credit Information Act**

***MAP supported this bill and it failed.***

The largest income support available to low- and moderate-income working people, the Earned Income Credit (EIC) distributes more money nationwide than either TANF or Food Stamps. As the biggest anti-poverty tool at the State's disposal and as an incentive to work, the EIC should be more widely publicized and utilized. This bill would have improved awareness of the EIC among those who may be eligible for it. In fact, it would have required the Comptroller to publish the maximum income at which an individual is eligible for the State EIC and make this information available to employers, who would then be required to make it available to employees who may be eligible for the federal and State EIC. This bill received a favorable report in the House Ways and Means Committee (15-5) but received an unfavorable report in the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee (8-6).

### **HB 1222/SB 499 - Correctional Services - Division of Parole and Probation - Supervision Fee**

***MAP supported this bill and it failed.***

This bill would have reduced barriers to reentry for low-income Marylanders with criminal records. Persons on parole in Maryland are billed \$40 per month for their supervision. The fee is largely uncollectible since most parolees are in dire financial situations.

When the legislature enacted the fee in 1991, they acknowledged that many parolees would be unable to pay and therefore created a series of broad categorical exemptions. Unfortunately, authority to grant the exemptions was given to the Parole Commission, a body that has little ongoing contact with parolees. Legislation to move authority from the Parole Commission to the Department of Parole Probation – whose agents are best suited to determine whether a parolee qualifies for an exemption – failed on the final day of the session.

### **HB 1255/SB 971 Public Service Commission - Alternative Payment Plans**

***MAP supported this bill and it failed.***

If passed, this bill would have required the Public Service Commission to promulgate regulations limiting the authority of public utilities (i.e., BGE, PEPCO, Allegheny Power) to terminate the gas or electric service of a residential customer for nonpayment without offering an alternative payment plan. This bill would have helped all customers struggling to pay their bills. During these difficult economic times, many Marylanders are unemployed or underemployed and this bill would have provided some relief and enable them to pay their bills and meet their basic needs. This bill did not receive a vote in either the House Economic Matters Committee or the Senate Finance Committee.

### **SB 243 Housing – Discrimination Based on Source of Income**

***MAP supported this bill and it failed.***

SB 243 would have prohibited landlords from discriminating against potential renters based on the source of their income. Such discrimination is often targeted at those receiving governmental subsidies, such as housing vouchers or disability assistance. Recipients of federal Housing Choice Vouchers are particularly impacted: after spending years on waiting lists, recipients have a limited time in which to use the voucher they have been granted. If they cannot find a landlord who will accept their voucher, they lose it. This bill received an unfavorable report in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee (5-6).

### **SB 468 Maryland Employment Opportunity Tax Credit Act**

#### ***MAP supported this bill and it failed.***

Having a job is imperative for an individual and family to meet its basic needs. This bill would have reinstated a tax credit for employers who hired recipients of Temporary Cash Assistance. The Maryland Employment Opportunity Tax Credit would have served as a mechanism to encourage employers to hire Maryland Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) beneficiaries. TCA is Maryland's largest cash assistance program and provides needed financial assistance to dependent children and other family members deprived of support due to the death, incapacitation, underemployment, or unemployment of one or both parents. This bill did not receive a vote in the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee.

### **Budget - Temporary Disability Assistance Program**

#### ***MAP supported full funding for TDAP and the outcome was reductions to the program***

The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) believed that the Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP) was over funded, specifically, DLS analysis reads "The high rate of growth in the Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP) caseload in fiscal 2009 has moderated in the first half of 2010. Based on projected caseloads, funding for the program in fiscal 2010 and 2011 is higher than necessary." The legislature accepted the DLS recommendation to reduce the proposed appropriation by \$1.7 million in FY2010 and \$6.5 million in FY2011.