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Homeless Persons
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Interfaith Works
Jewish Community Relations Council
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Job Opportunities Task Force
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Maryland Budget & Tax Policy Institute
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Legislative Committee
National Council on Alcoholism & Drug
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Public Justice Center
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Maryland Alliance for the Poor

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STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 343 PUBLIC BENEFITS – REQUIREMENT OF PROOF OF LAWFUL PRESENCE

**Submitted on Tuesday, February 9, 2010 to the
House Appropriations Committee**

By Branden McLeod, Chair

The Maryland Alliance for the Poor (MAP) is a statewide coalition of advocacy organizations, service providers, and faith communities working together to advocate for programs and public policies that make a positive difference in the lives of Marylanders living in or near poverty. MAP testifies today in opposition to HB 343.

HB 343, the aim of which seems to be preventing undocumented immigrants from accessing public benefits for which they are ineligible, will have 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 will add to this strain.

HB 343 will also negatively impact U.S. citizens and lawful immigrants applying for benefits. Many people living in poverty – especially those who are homeless – will have difficulty in accessing the documentation necessary to prove lawful presence. The bill would therefore have the impact of denying benefits to eligible individuals.

Given the strains on the current system, and the addition that HB 343 would bring, MAP respectfully urges an unfavorable report on the bill. Thank you for your attention.