



Testimony in Opposition to SB0021 Human Services – Public Assistance – Mandatory Drug Tests

Senate Finance Committee
January 23, 2014

Maryland Hunger Solutions strongly opposes SB0021, which requires individuals applying for, or receiving, temporary cash assistance (TCA) benefits under the Family Investment Program to submit to substance abuse testing for controlled substances under specified circumstances.

SB0021 is unnecessary and overly burdensome. The Department of Human Resources (DHR) has had a substance use screening protocol in place for the TCA program since the late 1990s. There is no evidence to suggest that the current procedures are not meeting the goal of identifying individuals who need assistance with substance abuse treatment.

SB0021 is unquestionably discriminatory. There are many categories of individuals that receive public benefits and utilize state resources, but this bill only proposes to test low-income parents for drug use. Research does not demonstrate that TCA recipients have a higher prevalence of drug use than the general population (which is approximately 9%).ⁱ In fact, the findings from Florida's welfare drug testing policy – recently ruled unconstitutional – found only 2.6% of their applicants failed a drug test: 3 times less than the prevalence of drug use in the general population.ⁱⁱ If the aim of SB0021 is to identify recipients of state aid that struggle with substance use, then this bill would have the greatest effect if it was required by every individual receiving state aid to undergo drug testing including college students, business owners, and legislators.

SB0021 is costly. Maryland continues to recover from the Great Recession. Increasing general and federal fund expenditures by \$590,090 in fiscal year 2015, and an additional \$221,069 in fiscal year 2016 on a questionable drug testing protocol- when a functioning drug screening program already exists - is an inefficient use of state resources. Additionally, when similar legislation has been repeatedly struck down as unconstitutional in other states, Maryland would likely be subjected to expensive court proceedings if SB0021 were to pass.

SB0021 is ineffective. Mandating drug testing of TCA applicants without simultaneously increasing greater access to substance use treatment is remiss - particularly considering there are already hundreds of individuals screened in the TCA application process that are on waiting lists for drug treatment slots. It would be more efficient and cost-effective to invest state resources in substance use treatment – research demonstrates that every dollar spent on treatment saves \$7 in public costs.ⁱⁱⁱ

Additionally, repealing of the provisions which require addiction specialists to conduct or refer for an assessment of the problem will result in less accurate diagnoses and treatment solutions for those who fail screening.

Mandating drug testing of TCA recipients under SB0021 will disproportionately harm vulnerable children and their guardians who need the TCA program to assist in meeting their basic needs.

Although Maryland is the richest state in the country, 16.2 percent of Maryland households had difficulty affording enough food to feed their family in 2012.^{iv} In these tough economic times, having a stable income can be the difference between putting food on the table or families having to go hungry. A reduction in family income – such as TCA - will unreasonably harm children living in or near poverty.

Additionally, placing a six-month cap on TCA benefits for an individual receiving treatment places an undue hardship on the individual and their families during a time when they need the support the most.

Maryland Hunger Solutions strongly opposes SB0021 as it is unnecessary, discriminatory, and will exacerbate already high levels of food insecurity experienced by vulnerable Maryland families.

Maryland Hunger Solutions appreciates your consideration, and respectfully urges an unfavorable report on SB0021.

Respectfully submitted,



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Maryland Hunger Solutions is a state-wide organization working to end hunger, promote nutrition, and improve well-being for Marylanders in need through education, advocacy, outreach and collaboration.

Maryland Hunger Solutions focuses on improving and increasing participation in federal nutrition programs to ensure that everyone has access to adequate healthy food every day.

ⁱ National Institute of Drug Abuse. (2012, December). *DrugFacts: Nationwide Trends*.

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/nationwide-trends>

ⁱⁱ Davis, Brittany. (2012, April 4). Florida's welfare drug tests cost more money than state saves, data shows. *Miami Herald*.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/04/20/2758871/floridas-welfare-drug-tests-cost.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ US Department of Health and Human Services. (2009, April). Costs Offset of Treatment Services.

http://www.samhsa.gov/grants/CSAT-GPRA/general/SAIS_GPRA_CostOffsetSubstanceAbuse.pdf

^{iv} Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). 2013. *Food Hardship in America 2012: Data for the Nation, States, 100 MSAs, and Every Congressional District*. http://frac.org/pdf/food_hardship_2012.pdf