

**Testimony:  
Chauna Brocht  
Director of Supportive Services  
Health Care for the Homeless**

Before the

**Maryland Senate: Finance Committee**

on

**SUPPORT for  
SB: 1231 Human Services – Temporary Disability Assistance Program**

March 22, 2018  
3 East Miller Senate Building  
Annapolis, Maryland

Thank you, Finance Committee Chair and members, for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 1231. My name is Chauna Brocht and I am the Director of Supportive Services at Health Care for the Homeless. I support SB 1231 because it would bring the Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP) benefit in line with Maryland's Temporary Cash Assistance benefit for a single adult over time and, in the short term, make a tangible difference for thousands of Marylanders by increasing the benefit by \$20 in 2019 and by making it an entitlement.

TDAP is a vital emergency resource for 17,000 of Maryland's most vulnerable residents who are unable to work due to serious medical disabilities. TDAP currently provides a stipend of \$185 a month to two groups: individuals with short-term disabilities (those expected to recover and return to the workforce within 12 months), and those with long-term disabilities deemed unable to work who are in the process of applying for federal disability assistance. (The \$185 amount is projected to increase to \$195 a month starting July 1, 2018, thanks to an increase Gov. Larry Hogan wrote into the FY2019 budget.)

According to Maryland's Department of Human Resources statistical report in 2016, 8% of TDAP recipients are seeking support for short-term disabilities while 92% are seeking support for long-term disabilities.

In my past 12 years at Health Care for the Homeless, I have worked with people who are disabled and are experiencing homelessness, many of whom rely on TDAP during a difficult period in their life. One of the programs I manage, the Convalescent Care Program, is a place for people experiencing homelessness and an acute medical condition to recuperate from a hospital stay. About one-third of the people in this program are experiencing homelessness for the first time. This is a frequent situation for people in our program: After working their whole lives and being independent, a sudden illness causes them to lose their jobs and, by extension, their rental room or apartment. With no savings and little or no family support, they are discharged from the hospital to our program in a homeless shelter. The long process of applying for federal disability benefits or undergoing physical rehab begins, but in the meantime, TDAP allows them to begin to put their lives back together.

The monthly TDAP loan helps recipients meet basic human needs, in particular housing and shelter, for at least a portion of each month. In a 2009 survey of 777 TDAP recipients conducted by Health Care for the Homeless, nearly two-thirds of recipients reported using some or all of their monthly stipends for housing or shelter. Roughly 44% of individuals surveyed spent some of their monthly benefit on food. Another 43% said that they use TDAP to access hygiene items such as soap, shampoo, and shaving supplies.

Imagine, for a minute, being in a TDAP recipient's shoes: unable to work and dependent on the charity of others for support. Now imagine the dignity and financial support a TDAP increase would provide for that individual with a disability.

Thank you for your strong support of SB 1231.