



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Maryland Legal Aid Launches Statewide Initiative to Protect Access to Essential Benefits

Baltimore, MD – Maryland Legal Aid has launched Benefits Justice Maryland, a statewide initiative to help Marylanders understand changing SNAP and Medical Assistance rules, take steps to protect their benefits, and get legal help when benefits are denied, reduced, delayed, or terminated.

The initiative comes as changes under the federal law H.R. 1 are affecting access to food and health care benefits across Maryland. According to recent data from the Governor's Office and the Maryland Department of Human Services, more than 36,800 Marylanders have lost SNAP benefits since federal changes took effect in November 2025. Additional changes affecting Medical Assistance are expected in 2027.

"For decades, Maryland Legal Aid has helped clients navigate benefits challenges through direct legal representation," said Kevonne Small, Chief Legal Officer at Maryland Legal Aid. **"This initiative highlights that enduring commitment and reinforces our promise to be a trusted source of advocacy, support, and hope for those who need us most."**

Through Benefits Justice Maryland, Maryland Legal Aid provides plain-language self-help resources, community education, direct legal services, and representation for low-income Marylanders navigating program changes. The initiative helps people understand benefits notices, new work and activity requirements, paperwork and renewal requirements, and what they can do when a benefits decision appears incorrect.

A major focus is helping Marylanders act before benefits are disrupted. People may lose assistance because they miss a deadline, do not understand a notice, or have difficulty providing required documentation, even when they should qualify for benefits.

Beginning in 2027, some Medical Assistance recipients will also face new work requirements (called community engagement) and more frequent eligibility reviews, creating another need for clear information and early assistance.

“We know that some people think that they will no longer qualify for benefits, when in fact they could qualify,” said Cornelia Bright Gordon, Advocacy Director for Administrative Law at Maryland Legal Aid. **“We encourage community members to file their applications, and to contact Maryland Legal Aid if their benefits are stopped or denied. SNAP and Medical Assistance can have a big impact on a family’s well-being, especially during this costly period.”**

Maryland Legal Aid is working with community partners across the state to provide education and connect people with legal assistance when needed. Benefits Justice Maryland encourages anyone who receives SNAP or Medical Assistance to keep their contact information up to date with their local Department of Social Services (DSS), open and read every notice carefully, check deadlines, keep copies of important documents, and seek help as soon as possible if they have questions or concerns.

A notice that benefits are being reduced or terminated does not necessarily mean the decision is correct, or that a person has no options.

To learn more about Benefits Justice Maryland, access free resources, or find legal help, visit mdlab.org/benefits-justice.

For more information or to arrange an interview with a Maryland Legal Aid representative, contact Nicholle Granger at ngranger@mdlab.org.

About Maryland Legal Aid

Established in 1911, Maryland Legal Aid is a statewide nonprofit 501(c)(3) law firm that advocates with and for Marylanders experiencing poverty to achieve equity and social justice through free civil legal services, community collaboration, and systemic change. From its 11 offices across the state and through its many community-based clinics,

Maryland Legal Aid helps clients preserve and access safe and affordable housing; maintain custody of their children and be safe from domestic violence; and increase their economic security by defending against consumer debt, including foreclosures and tax sales, removing barriers to employment, and accessing critical income supports such as Medicaid, SNAP, unemployment, and other vital public benefits. In its advocacy, Maryland Legal Aid seeks to change systems that perpetuate poverty and inequity.