



Maryland Community Action Partnership ANTI-POVERTY FUND

2024

The Maryland Community Action Partnership (“MCAP”) was established in 1986. MCAP is a non-profit, multi-regional association advocates on behalf of Community Action Agencies (“CAAs”) and partnering organizations that serve individuals and families with low incomes who reside in Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia to ensure their voices are heard at the local, state, and federal levels.

A commitment to the Community Action Anti-Poverty Fund is a commitment to economic mobility and support for equitable economic opportunity that alleviates barriers for historically marginalized and oppressed communities. The Community Action Fund supports the work of Community Action Agencies across Maryland to offer competitive wages, meet the rising demand for services, and revitalize communities through housing and community development.



Competitive Wage

The Community Action Anti-Poverty Fund will provide critical funding for Agencies to offer competitive wages to the essential workers who provide services that move families out of poverty and develop pathways to economic mobility. Economic mobility describes how an individual’s financial well-being changes over time and predicts the opportunity one has to transition from a lower economic level to a higher one. Agencies struggle to find and retain staff due their inability to offer competitive wages and many staff working in Community Action qualify for the same services they provide.

According to a study conducted by researchers at the University of Washington, nonprofit human-services workers are paid 37 percent less than workers in other industries with comparable jobs. The Maryland Self Sufficiency report conducted in 2023 shows that it is not uncommon to see that many employees do not earn wages adequate to meet their families’ basic needs without public or private assistance. ([Click here](#) to view Maryland’s 2023 Self-Sufficiency Calculator).

Offering a competitive wage is a commitment to economic mobility and equitable economic opportunity for those working to provide services to our state’s most vulnerable populations. The Community Action Anti-poverty fund will help Agencies attract and retain qualified staff to provide quality services to clients. Secondly, it will help reduce staff turnover rates, which can be costly for the agency and disruptive for clients. Third, it will help ensure that staff are motivated and committed to their work c, leading to better outcomes for clients.



Increased Demand for Services

Between 2018 and 2021, Maryland’s 17 Community Action Agencies collectively served 1.6 million people and have experienced a staggering 84% increase in demand for services. This increased demand was initially driven by the pandemic and has not abated ([Learn more here](#)). While the increased federal and state COVID related funding has been largely expended, the dramatically increased need remains, making it impossible to meet the needs of our communities with pre-pandemic funding levels. During the pandemic, CAAs became the “go-to” agencies to provide assistance to Marylanders in need and are now faced with tracking a new metric: the number of people to whom they provide denials. Due to decreased funding and much more stringent eligibility thresholds, Community Action Agencies are finding themselves faced with the impossible challenge of turning away individuals and families in desperate need of support. To continue meeting the needs of Maryland’s most vulnerable populations, Community Action Agencies must sustain the valuable expanded capacity that was enabled by COVID related funding.



Housing and Community Development

Housing equity is the hallmark of a thriving community, a basic human need, and a fundamental building block for creating healthy communities, promoting social and economic mobility, and reducing poverty and inequality. The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development’s [Statewide Eviction Data Dashboard](#) shows the stark reality that evictions are climbing in Maryland as we face the cliff created by the ending of the State’s ERAP program. To stabilize families, an expansion of programs to remove systemic barriers and provide access to resources and opportunities that promote economic mobility is needed, with the goal of reaching families “upstream” before they reach eviction. In addition to the end of ERAP funding, the state is grappling with an inadequate supply of affordable housing and an ever increasing need to preserve and increase the availability of affordable housing units.

Equitable access to housing is not an isolated need; it is directly related to an individual’s ability to access healthcare, education, food, social capital, and many other determinants of overall wellbeing. The Community Action Anti-Poverty fund will support housing equity by creating space for CAAs to innovate using strategies which include housing and physical revitalization (i.e., preserving, producing, and managing affordable housing units), people-based strategies focused on financial stability and health, and community systems such as economic development and access to resources and opportunities that promote economic mobility.