

MARYLAND COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP

# ADVOCACY DAY GUIDE



## MCAP TALKING POINTS

### What is MCAP?

Maryland Community Action Partnership (MCAP) is a network of community action agencies across Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia. We connect our members to each other and the resources they need to develop effective approaches to reducing poverty. Collectively, MCAP's 19 member agencies provide lifechanging services to nearly 300,000 children and families experiencing poverty across our region.

### What Does MCAP Do?

We strengthen our members' capacity to provide innovative strategies, community solutions, and opportunities that help people achieve economic security through:

- **Advocacy:** We work to ensure the voices of people experiencing poverty are heard at the local, state, and national levels. Informed by our member agencies, we advocate for policies that are proven to advance social and economic mobility.
- **Training and Technical Assistance:** We work hand in hand with community action agencies to build organizational effectiveness, through training that promotes best practices for community and family wellbeing. We facilitate opportunities for community action agencies to learn from one another through our annual conference, webinars, regional meetings, member portal, and newsletter
- **Resources:** We offer a suite of tools to help our members meet the needs of their communities through assessment, strategic planning, outreach, and development.
- **Communication:** We inspire hope and action by sharing stories from Community Action Agencies about what's working, and help shape smarter federal and state proposals on how to help families succeed by sharing solutions that work.

# What is a Community Action Agency?

Community action agencies (CAAs) are local organizations that provide a wealth of services targeted to the specific needs of their communities. CAAs empower people experiencing poverty to achieve economic security through proven approaches.

## What is MCAP's Purpose?

MCAP serves two major purposes: to serve low income individuals and families with other types of critical needs such as rental assistance, energy assistance, job placement services, and more.

## Community Action Is...

- **Essential:** CAAs are often the only organizations capable of delivering resources to their communities quickly and effectively.
- **Action by the Community, for the Community:** Local challenges require local solutions. CAAs conduct regular community assessments to identify local needs and develop targeted action plans.
- **An Ecosystem of Support:** CAAs provide a range of services such as affordable housing, financial counseling, employment, education, weatherization, food and nutrition programs, and emergency shelters.
- **A Whole-Family Approach:** Too often, supports and services for families experiencing poverty benefit either caregivers or children. CAAs use a “whole-family” approach to breaking the cycle of generational poverty by supporting children and the adults in their lives simultaneously.
- **A Beacon of Hope:** CAAs are often the first intervention for individuals experiencing poverty and the last form of support as they achieve economic security.

## MCAP's Role During COVID-19

The MCAP network was essential in assisting and supporting those who were adversely impacted by the pandemic. They were critical partners in working with the state and county to prevent evictions by distributing emergency rental assistance through the Emergency Fund. MCAP Agencies also provided food for families in need through their various food pantries and delivered food to those unable to access food distribution locations. MCAP Agencies ensured that shelters continued to stay open despite being at full capacity.

Employees at MCAP Agencies had to physically work out of their buildings due to the types of services they provide. They put themselves at risk in order to do the essential work needed to support our community.

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## POLICY TALKING POINTS

### **CAA Employees Deserve a Living Wage**

CAA employees are essential workers on the front lines of the pandemic, providing critical services for people in need. But too often, CAA employees do not earn enough to meet their own basic needs. This is unacceptable. We must care for the needs of those who care for others. Increasing annual wages for CAA employees acknowledges the importance of their work and helps to ensure the continuity of their essential services.

Community Action drives statewide success. It creates change at a local level and makes Maryland a better place to live. An investment in CAA employees is an investment in the well-being of our state.

### **Community Action Fund**

This is why MCAP needs a **\$4M Community Action Fund**. It will help the CAAs maintain the services and resources that they provide. It will also provide CAAs with the opportunity to bring their employees up to a living wage because CAAs are mandated by law to provide these essential services. This money will be budgeted through CSBG and other state funds.

### **Permanent Source of 2-G / Whole Family Funding**

Through the Community Action Network, whole family approaches to moving families toward economic security are being implemented across the state. This holistic approach to serving families (also known as the 2-Generation approach) is helping families develop pathways to achieve their aspirations and goals. The Community Action Network seeks a **permanent source of funding in the amount of \$1 million** to continue the work of moving families out of poverty.

### **Closing**

MCAP and its member Agencies would like to continue the good work they are doing and funding is critical for this essential work to continue.