

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 First Reader

House Bill 1517
 Appropriations

(Delegate P. Young, *et al.*)

Critical Medical Needs Program Expansion Pilot Program - Social Services

This bill establishes the Critical Medical Needs Program (CMNP) Expansion Pilot Program in the Department of Human Services (DHS). The expansion pilot program must assist critical medically vulnerable individuals and their households located in Baltimore City and Baltimore County with the application process for social services. DHS must create one full-time position and one part-time position to provide administrative support to the expansion pilot program. DHS must partner with the Office of People’s Counsel, the Fuel Fund of Central Maryland, the Cancer Support Foundation, other State agencies, and any other organization that DHS determines appropriate to implement and administer the CMNP Expansion Pilot Program. By October 1, 2021, and each year thereafter, DHS must report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the CMNP Expansion Pilot Program. **The bill terminates October 31, 2023.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: DHS general fund expenditures increase by \$72,000 in FY 2021 to provide the required staff to the expansion pilot program. Future years reflect annualization and termination of the pilot program in FY 2024. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	72,000	76,100	78,200	26,700	0
Net Effect	(\$72,000)	(\$76,100)	(\$78,200)	(\$26,700)	\$0

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: “Social services” means the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medical Assistance, Temporary Cash Assistance, Temporary Disability Assistance, Family Emergency Grants, Adult Emergency Grants, Emergency Eviction Prevention, and Department of Aging grants for seniors or disabled individuals.

To qualify for assistance under the CMNP Expansion Pilot Program, a critical medically vulnerable individual must (1) be receiving or have received assistance from a navigator under CMNP and (2) be unable to complete the applications for available social services. DHS may not require a critically medically vulnerable individual to provide any additional documentation of medical need to qualify for assistance.

DHS must (1) establish training requirements for navigators and publish the requirements on DHS’s website; (2) train navigators or facilitate the training of navigators by others on an ongoing basis; and (3) develop a database and establish a tracking system to monitor the status of applications for social services for critical medically vulnerable individuals who participate in the expansion pilot program.

Current Law/Background: “Critical medically vulnerable individual” means an individual who (1) has a severe health condition that will be aggravated due to the termination or noncontinuation of electric or gas service, or needs life-support equipment as documented and certified in accordance with specified methods; (2) has or will have their electric or gas service terminated for nonpayment; and (3) is unable to complete the energy assistance applications under available energy assistance programs, including energy efficiency programs offered by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

“Navigator” means a representative from a medical facility or from a public or private assistance agency or organization who (1) is in personal contact with a critical medically vulnerable individual and (2) assists the critical medically vulnerable individual in the energy assistance application process.

Critical Medical Needs Pilot Program

In response to concerns about the serious impact of utility service loss on medically vulnerable individuals, the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) implemented a critical medical needs pilot program in 2015. The pilot program assisted households with medically vulnerable members in accessing energy assistance benefits and utility service extensions more quickly. Participants received support during the application process from trained navigators.

Critical Medical Needs Program

Chapters 282 and 283 of 2019 formally established CMNP in DHS. In administering CMNP, OHEP reduces barriers to the energy assistance application process for critical medically vulnerable individuals and their households. Obtaining State and federal financial assistance for their electric, gas, or other energy source bills helps ensure that service continues or is restored for critical medically vulnerable individuals.

OHEP must partner with specified entities, including the Office of People's Counsel, electric and gas companies, nonprofit organizations, other State agencies, and any other organization that OHEP determines appropriate. CMNP must facilitate assistance to critical medically vulnerable individuals and their households in obtaining financial assistance through navigators. OHEP must determine qualifications and establish training requirements for navigators; it must train navigators or facilitate the training of navigators by others.

Per Maryland regulations, OHEP must work with electric and gas companies to implement, for critical medically vulnerable individuals, (1) a medical hold on electric or gas service or an expedited process to grant the extension of electric or gas service for those who will have services terminated and (2) an expedited process for the restoration of electric or gas service for those who have had their electric or gas service terminated. OHEP must establish a tracking system of the status of individuals who participate in the program and adopt implementing regulations.

DHS advises that, between October 2019 and January 2020, four training programs were held for navigators, which resulted in 148 new navigators. In total, DHS reports that there are 306 CMNP navigators working in hospitals and cancer centers. Between July and December 2019, 93 applications for energy assistance benefits assisted by navigators were processed.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by \$71,968 in fiscal 2021, which accounts for the bill's October 1, 2020 effective date.

DHS has determined that one regular full-time position and one regular part-time position are needed to implement the bill. However, the Department of Legislative Services advises that the added responsibilities incurred by this legislation are not permanent and, thus, may be performed by contractual employees. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring two contractual human service administrators (one full-time and one part-time) to provide assistance with social services applications, provide administrative support to the pilot program, and complete the required reports. It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Contractual Positions	1.5
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$61,473
Operating Expenses	<u>10,495</u>
Total FY 2021 State Expenditures	\$71,968

Future year expenditures reflect full salaries with annual increases and employee turnover and ongoing operating expenses. The positions terminate with the pilot program on October 31, 2023.

This estimate does not include any health insurance costs that could be incurred for specified contractual employees under the State's implementation of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Aging; Baltimore City; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Housing and Community Development; Department of Human Services; Department of Legislative Services

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