

# **Testimony\_SB719\_\_Human Services-OHEP-Uniform Redet**

Uploaded by: Alfred Bartlett, MD

Position: FAV



**Committee: Finance**

**Testimony on: SB719 “Human Services – Office of Home Energy Programs – Uniform Redetermination Process”**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: March 1, 2022**

The Chesapeake Chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) submits this testimony in support of SB719, which will remove administrative barriers and inconsistency in the Office of Home Energy Programs’ (OHEP) enrollment and redetermination processes for senior citizens qualified for low-income energy assistance.

CPSR is an active member of the Energy Advocates Coalition, a multi-organization partnership initiated by the Fuel Fund of Maryland, that works to identify and help resolve problems for Maryland households living at the intersection of poverty and energy burden. SB719 is a direct product of analyses and on-the-ground work with such households – specifically low-income elderly citizens – done by some of the Coalition’s member organizations.

**The problem:**

- **Over 40 percent of the population eligible for OHEP Energy Assistance are seniors (over age 60)<sup>1</sup>**
- **Many seniors – especially those living with small, limited incomes – have difficulty navigating complicated administrative processes.** Some may have cognitive, physical, or literacy limitations that make completing such processes difficult or impossible. Those limitations, as well as lack of ability to travel, often make a requirement to complete administrative processes in person very difficult. In an era where their younger family members often live far away, many seniors have nobody to help them. Those on limited income, like small amounts of Social Security, may not have a computer, or if they do, no internet service; even if they have internet access, completing online forms is often challenging. The limitations and risks of doing things outside the home in the face of Covid have only made these challenges even greater for this high-risk segment of our citizenry.
- **OHEP’s present process for energy assistance eligibility redetermination is variable and unnecessarily complicated.** OHEP requires annual redetermination of energy assistance recipients’ eligibility. While OHEP has a stated policy of allowing automatic annual redetermination of senior eligibility, the various local offices and participating agencies who enroll energy assistance beneficiaries are variable in following this policy. The result is that many seniors are being required to re-apply and re-establish eligibility each year, a difficult administrative burden. Similarly, there is limited assistance available to seniors whose ability to complete required redetermination processes at home or in person is limited.

**The solution: HB719 will address these unnecessary administrative energy assistance difficulties for eligible seniors.**

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<sup>1</sup> Applied Public Policy Research Institute for Study and Evaluation (APPRISE), *Maryland Low-Income Market Characterization Report*; prepared for the Maryland Office of People’s Counsel; October, 2018

- HB719 simply requires OHEP itself and its implementing offices and local administering agencies to observe the uniform practice of annual redetermination of eligibility for seniors whose eligibility has not changed, without their having to go through the complex re-application process.
- HB719 requires OHEP's local administering agencies to offer locations that are reasonably accessible to seniors for providing energy assistance enrollment and redetermination processes, and notification of these services to all income eligible seniors.
- HB719 also requires establishment of a policy to provide assistance – in the form of a home visit or assistance to the senior on their behalf by another individual – to allow those who are not able to complete the process on their own to receive the energy assistance – and its continuation – for which they are eligible.

The fact that low-income seniors are a substantial share of Maryland residents who need and are eligible for energy assistance is often overlooked. It is a reminder, however, that we often forget the needs of those who have lived productive lives and now face the limitations of poverty, diminished capacity, and isolation.

HB719 is one important part of recognizing, and responding to, this reality.

For this reason, CPSR strongly supports HB719, and urges a favorable report by this Committee.

Respectfully,

Alfred Bartlett, M.D., F.A.A.P.  
Board Member and Energy Policy Lead  
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility  
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**sb719 pdf.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cindy Carter

Position: FAV



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Finance

SB719

Support

March 1, 2022

Cindy Carter  
Cancer Support Foundation

Good afternoon madam chair Kelly and committee. I am Cindy Carter Co-Founder of the Critical Medical Needs Program, Founder of the Power to the People Program and Executive Director of Cancer Support Foundation. I am here today in favor of SB719 Uniform Redetermination Process. This bill will both strengthen an existing process as well as make some changes that help protect our seniors.

Seniors aging in place in Maryland is a big issue that is growing all of the time. Keeping the lights and heat on for our seniors is basic is being able to age safely in their homes.

Office of Home Energy Program (OHEP) has as part of their operations manual a program called Redetermination Process. This program allows for those who are 65 yrs. and above and are in the OHEP system to sign a verification letter each year that their household situation is the same. With that confirmation letter being signed OHEP will reprocess their energy assistance grants. Then after three years these clients need to do a new application.

This bill proposes changes to this process to protect our seniors in the state. The process is not consistent across all counties with some seniors getting this and others not. They seniors are identified but each local OHEP office can elect to send a Redetermination notice to those in that database. We are proposing that this process be mandated to be done in all counties and Baltimore City. We are also proposing that once a person is in this program that as long as their household situation has not changed that would trigger a new application that the current requirement for a every three-year new application requirement be dropped.



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Notice of the Redetermination Process to those who are eligible will come as an addressed envelope with prepaid postage so after the form is reviewed and signed to verify it will get back to the proper place to be processed.

As seniors age, many face increased health issues and asking them to refile a new application is more and more difficult. The OHEP system is not provide a customer service experience. Many seniors are left to find on their own help to find someone who can help them get through this process. The pandemic really illustrated the challenges with the process especially since many seniors do not use a computer.

If the household has had changes that require a new application, we will be introducing a plan to help these seniors get that done.

This change would allow those who are 65 yrs old and above, most of whom do not have household changes that would trigger a new application, be able to be protected, continuing to get the grants they need for their lights and heat.

Since the income threshold for those 67yrs old and above has changed to a higher figure there will be more seniors able to get these grants than ever before.

Since 41% of those in Maryland who are eligible for the grants are over 60 yrs old, this is a large group of citizens who need help and they are trying to deal with a system that is making it harder and harder for them to age safely in their homes.

We are urging a favorable report on SB 719 to help our seniors age safely in their homes with their lights and heat kept on.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cindy Carter".

Cindy Carter  
Co-Founder Critical Medical Needs Program  
Cancer Support Foundation, Inc.

**FuelFund.FavorableSupport.SB 719.FINAL.pdf**

Uploaded by: Debbie Brown

Position: FAV



**Finance Committee  
SB 719 - Favorable Response**

Thank you, Madam Chair Kelley and members of the Finance Committee. My name is Sam Impink, and I am the Utility Assistance Director at the Fuel Fund of Maryland.

I am here today testifying on behalf of the Fuel Fund of Maryland **in support of SB 719**.

The Redetermination process for potentially receiving Office of Home Energy (known as OHEP) grants is already in place. However, not all jurisdictions prioritize the process. Passing **SB 719** would require **ALL** jurisdictions to follow the designated procedures regarding seniors and redetermining their eligibility for an OHEP grant. The Fuel Fund of Maryland has encountered too many seniors not able to complete the energy assistance process with OHEP because of offices not seeing individuals in person. When a senior is denied the opportunity to visit an OHEP office in person, they are forced to complete the energy assistance process digitally. Unfortunately, too many seniors struggle with the digital divide and their journey with the OHEP process fails.

By having OHEP mail a one-page letter to the senior verifying if anything in their household has changed from the previous year, the senior is empowered to sign the confirmation letter and return (in a postage paid envelope). This simple, yet effective process will increase the number of seniors receiving energy assistance from OHEP. More importantly, the senior will not need to complete this process every three years. One and done! Additionally, the State can receive timely data from the Department of Social Security on deceased clients which will reduce fraud of this process.

The Fuel Fund of Maryland would like to recommend that the State OHEP office be responsible for the mailing of the redetermination letters and not rely on each authority to mail out the letters to the senior households. Please note that the signed document with the returned envelope would be directed to the proper jurisdiction not the State OHEP office. By doing so, the redetermination process will be more timely, efficient, and effective.



All board members are volunteers and serve without compensation. The Fuel Fund of Maryland does not share, sell, lease, or otherwise provide contributor information to any other organization or business. The Fuel Fund of Maryland, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization – donations to which are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. Financial report is available upon request from Fuel Fund of Maryland, 57 W. Timonium Road, Suite 208, Timonium, MD 21093, or by phone at (410) 235-9080. Documents and information filed in accordance with the Maryland Charitable Solicitations Act available upon request from the Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401 for the cost of printing and postage.





Again, the Fuel Fund of Maryland is in support of making the redetermination process uniform for all jurisdictions that manage energy assistance applications.

On behalf of the Fuel Fund of Maryland, I respectfully urge a favorable report for **SB 719**. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.

*Sam Impink*

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Sam Impink, Utility Assistance Director

*2/28/22*

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Date

# **SB0719-Office of Home Energy Services-Redeterminat**

Uploaded by: Diana Younts

Position: FAV



**Committee: Finance**

**Testimony on: SB0719 - Office of Home Energy Services-Uniform Redetermination Process**

**Organization: MLC Climate Justice Wing**

**Submitting: Diana Younts, Co-Chair**

**Position: Favorable**

**Hearing Date: March 1, 2022**

Dear M. Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB0719. The MLC Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably for this bill. .

SB0719 is a companion bill to SB0905. It allows Seniors over the age of 65 who receive energy assistance to be automatically renewed for such assistance annually, rather than be compelled to reapply. 41% of Marylanders who need energy assistance are Seniors. Many of these Seniors, some of whom may be slipping in mental capacity, find it challenging to re-apply each year, on-line, to the six different programs, each requiring numerous verification documents. Seniors who are not tech savvy and whose memory may be slipping are utterly defeated by the process. And if these Seniors don't have patient, loving, tech savvy family members they end up not getting the energy assistance they need.

SB0719 is a simple and necessary fix.

We urge you to vote favorably for this thoughtful and caring legislation.

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Uploaded by: Eileen O'Connor-Liebman

Position: FAV

Edward J. Lee, M.D.  
Tejaswi R. Sastry, M.D.  
Mohit Narang, M.D.  
Andrew S. Mener, M.D.  
Yousuf A. Gaffar, M.D.  
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## Finance

### SB719 – SUPPORT

February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Eileen O'Connor-Liebman, Patient Advocate  
Maryland Oncology Hematology  
10710 Charter Drive, Suite G020  
Columbia, Maryland 21044  
410-964-2212 Ext. 1136

To: **Senator Benson and esteemed members of the Senate Finance Committee**

RE: **Testimony in Support of SB 719 Office of Home Energy Programs – Uniform Redetermination Process**

Dear Senator Benson and esteemed members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am Eileen O'Connor-Liebman, Patient Advocate for Maryland Oncology Hematology in Columbia Maryland writing today in favor of SB719.

The Critical Medical Needs Program (CMNP) started as a Pilot Program in our office in Spring of 2015. We were beyond excited and honored to be a part of the process when it was passed into law in Spring of 2019. This program is a successful partnership between state agencies, utility companies, trained navigators and non-profits.

**The Uniform Redetermination Process SB719** would allow seniors who are OHEP eligible to submit an application for Home Energy Assistance with all documentation one time. Thereafter, they would be verified via mailing or other means. This would be a significant benefit for seniors as many of them really struggle with the application & gathering of documents. It is also extremely difficult for them to get to a local OHEP office. The last several applications that I have helped process through the Critical Medical Needs Program have been patients over 65 years of age. You can hear the frustration, embarrassment and overwhelmingness in their voice when helping them navigate the system. Many of our seniors are often being cared for by various family members at different times and that scenario makes it incredibly difficult to maneuver. **The Uniform Redetermination Process** will help the most vulnerable residents across the state apply for the energy assistance grants that are available for those who qualify and ease the burden of re-applying each year.

SB719 is a necessary and vital component that will help our most vulnerable, our seniors. We are in support and are asking for a favorable report on SB719.

Sincerely,

Eileen O'Connor-Liebman, Patient Advocate

**SB719 OPC\_support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Endia Montgomery

Position: FAV

DAVID S. LAPP  
PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

WILLIAM F. FIELDS  
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

JOSEPH G. CLEAVER  
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

————— OPC —————  
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BRANDI NIELAND  
DIRECTOR, CONSUMER  
ASSISTANCE UNIT

**BILL NO.:** Senate Bill 719  
Human Services- Office of Home Energy  
Programs- Uniform Redetermination Process

**COMMITTEE:** Finance

**HEARING DATE:** March 1, 2022

**SPONSOR:** Senator Benson

**POSITION:** Support

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The Office of People's Counsel supports Senate Bill 719.

SB 719 simplifies and standardizes the energy assistance process for seniors 65 years and older. The Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) has a redetermination process in place for seniors that requires them to reapply to the program with a full application once every three years and states that the applicant must respond to requests for additional documentation within 15 days. These requirements create barriers for seniors. The application and document gathering process is arduous, especially if there are mobility or transportation issues that stop them from being able to get to a local OHEP office for assistance. Many seniors live on a fixed income and their eligibility for the program typically does not change. Having someone on a fixed income regularly reapply results in vulnerable households losing their benefit and produces an unnecessary administrative burden on OHEP to process these applications.

SB 719 would require seniors 65 and older to only apply to OHEP with a full application one time, and then moving forward they would receive a post card asking them to verify that there was no change in income or household profile. This bill would also allow these applicants 45 days to respond to requests for additional documentation instead of 15 days under current law. Implementing these two changes statewide would simplify the process for both the applicant and OHEP. Most importantly, removing these barriers for low-income seniors in Maryland would help to keep their home energy bills affordable.

**Recommendation:** OPC requests a favorable report from the Committee on SB 719.

**SB719:HB1001 final.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laurel Peltier

Position: FAV



# **HB1001 / SB719**

## **For Seniors 65+**



## **Home Energy Assistance Application Automatic Yearly Renewals**

### **Problem:**

**Older adults 65+ must re-apply year in and year out.**

- One-third of OHEP-eligible families are seniors on fixed incomes.
- Seniors struggle w/ Office of Home Energy Programs application.
- Many can't get to local "OHEP" offices.
- Uploading & having all necessary verification documents is arduous.

### **Solution:**

**Auto-enroll seniors 65+ each year after initial entry into OHEP.**

- Send yearly postcard. Family verifies that income & household profile is the same.
- Reduces work burdens for OHEP offices.
- Keeps home energy bills affordable for low-income Seniors.

### **Hearings:**

**House sponsor: Delegate Carey, ECM hearing March 3rd, 1pm**

**Senate sponsor: Sen. Benson, Senate Finance March 1st, 1pm**

## **HB1001/SB 719**

### **How is this bill a solution?**

**Simplifies energy assistance participation for seniors (65 yrs.+) to get Energy Assistance grants to make home energy bills more affordable and to keep on their heat and lights lights.**

Broad stakeholder working group collaborating since May 2021.  
(Utilities, state agencies, non-profits and other organizations.)

#### **Problem:**

- Forty-one percent of 400,000 eligible households for energy assistance grants ("OHEP") are 60 yrs. and older.
- There are many barriers to getting these grants.
- Pandemic really brought to light the challenges that seniors have in getting through the process.
- Seniors need extra help which this program would provide.
- Seniors need to be re enrolled each year in the program without having to do a new application which this program provides.
- Tricky application (6 different grants!) and ID, social security cards, income verification and utility bill needed.

**We need your support for Maryland seniors!**

For more information contact Cindy Carter  
Co-Founder of Critical Medical Needs Program

(passed into law 2019)

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cpcarter@aol.com

**SB719-FAVORABLE-PELTIER PDF.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laurel Peltier

Position: FAV

# SB719

## FAVORABLE TESTIMONY

SENATE FINANCE SPONSOR: Benson  
SENATE HEARING: MARCH 1, 2022

FROM: L. PELTIER

### SILVER LIGHTS ENERGY SAVERS - OHEP RE-DETERMINATION FOR 65+

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Under the *Silver Energy Savers Program*, this important bill would codify in to law Department of Human Services Office of Home Energy Programs application redetermination process that's a mandate today, yet not a law.

OHEP eligible low-income person age 65 and older would be automatically redetermined for energy assistance grants with much simpler and cost-effective mail-in process. Today redetermination is not constantly done by all local offices.

Today, every senior 65+, even ages 86, home bound, sick, frail or unable to drive, is required to re-apply, year in and year out, at a local office with a state employee taking the application.

Based on OHEP's reporting in the PSC 8903 9/9/21 hearing, of the ~145,000 households that applied for OHEP in 2021, 66,000 were denied. A 45% denial rate points to a significant challenge with this process, especially for seniors. Seniors are not technologically savvy. Plus, given their age ,their income levels and household's makeup will rarely change.

#### **SB719 is smart government:**

- Reduces the OHEP labor costs since tens of thousands of seniors will not be re-applying every single year.
- Automates and centralizes a post card mail-in process that is leagues more efficient than today's process.
- Offers low-income seniors a way to stay in place and safely get utility bill grants.
- Reduces the denial rates for seniors who must keep their heat and lights on.
- Ensures redetermination, which his supposed to happen today, happens.

**3554\_001.pdf**

Uploaded by: ROBIN LINDENBERGER

Position: FAV

Edward J. Lee, M.D.  
Tejaswi R. Sastry, M.D.  
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Laura Hostovich, AOCNP  
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## Finance Committee

SB719

## Support Bill

Maryland Oncology Hematology  
Robin Lindenberger Patient Advocate

Good Afternoon Finance Committee,

My name is Robin Lindenberger, Patient Advocate at Maryland Oncology Hematology and I here today in favor of SB 719.

The Office of Home Energy Programs has been instrumental in providing much needed help during this unfortunate time in their lives. This is financially harder on our senior (65+) patients who are on fixed incomes. The decision to pay for food/medications versus paying for electric/fuel is their daily struggle and it does not have to be this way thanks to the Critical Medical Needs Program. This program alleviates the worry and burden placed on them.

The application process can be very intimidating to our senior patients. Most don't have transportation to OHEP offices to renew annually. Once they gather all the documentation many do not have computer capabilities to download and forward information. I am in favor of this bill because it would streamline the application process for our patients as well as the OHEP offices. I feel its just the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Lindenberger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robin Lindenberger

# **Human Services – Office of Home Energy Programs –**

Uploaded by: Senator Joanne C. Benson

Position: FAV

JOANNE C. BENSON  
Legislative District 24  
Prince George's County

Finance Committee

Joint Committees

Children, Youth, and Families

Ending Homelessness

Fair Practices and State Personnel Oversight

Management of Public Funds

Protocol



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Joanne C. Benson

SB 719: Human Services – Office of Home Energy Programs – Uniform  
Redetermination Process

Good afternoon Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 719. Like SB 905, this bill is to help seniors that are able to take advantage grants offered to Marylanders through the Office of Home Energy Program (OHEP), but have difficulties with mobility or working through the process.

The purpose of this bill is to make it easier for households with a 65 year old and older resident to stay enrolled in energy assistance programs by streamlining the eligibility redetermination process.

The process this bill proposes is currently outlined in the Office of Home Energy Program (OHEP) 2021 Operations Manual. We want to codify this into law to ensure all of the local OHEP offices around the state are following the process. Currently, a person enrolled in energy assistance program would need to know they had to apply for redetermination annually. Often the year goes by and their eligibility ends because they didn't request, complete and submit a redetermination letter. If they do, and they remain eligible, then after three years that individual must start the application process over again.

This bill does two things:

- 1) It would ensure all enrollees would receive a uniform redetermination letter in the mail that provides them with the ability to answer questions regarding any change to their status that would impact their eligibility.
- 2) It would remove the requirement to reapply after three years. No new application would be necessary as long as the customer indicates that there are no changes to the information that determines their eligibility



I was surprised by the Fiscal Note for this bill. While I acknowledge some initial budgetary outlay for standardizing the letter, mailing it out and providing postage-free return envelopes, it is hard to imagine the need for 23 additional full-time positions to facilitate this process. Ultimately, this bill will actually save OHEP work and money by reducing the number of reapplications. Given the funds allocated to them for the staffing of previous programs such as Critical Medical Needs and other programs, I may feel it necessary to request an audit of OHEP's operations.

Because this bill creates relief and access to a currently obscure and cumbersome process, I believe it is the right thing to do, and I do not believe it requires the funds as stated in the Fiscal Note.

**Because of this, I urge a favorable consideration of House Bill 719.**

# **SB 719 OHEP Uniform Redetermination Process.pdf**

Uploaded by: Tammy Bresnahan

Position: FAV



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**SB 719 Silver Energy Savers Human Services -Energy Assistance  
Redetermination  
FAVORABLE  
Senate Finance Committee  
March 1, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chair Kelley and members of the Senate Finance Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan, Director Advocacy AARP MD. AARP MD and its over 850,000 members support SB 719 Silver Energy Savers Human Services - Energy Assistance Redetermination. We thank Senator Benson for sponsoring this important legislation that will allow older Marylanders to access energy assistance programs.

This bill requires the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) in the Department of Human Services (DHS) to develop a uniform determination process, to be updated annually, to assist eligible energy customers who are at least 65 years old in enrolling in energy assistance programs. OHEP must maintain records organized by county, including the number of households during the previous year (1) that were eligible for redetermination; (2) whose notice of the redetermination process was verified and returned; and (3) that were reenrolled in the redetermination process. This information must be reported to the General Assembly by December 1 each year. DHS must adopt regulations to implement the bill.

Home energy costs make up a sizable portion of low-income senior household budgets. In Maryland, 41% of the 400,000 low-income households are older adults 60 and older. Since the pandemic, residential prices for natural gas, electricity, and fuel oil have increased significantly. According to the Applied Public Policy Research “APPRISE” report, low-income older households spend an average of 13 percent of their income on residential energy.

AARP Maryland thinks one reason for this home energy dilemma is that the current OHEP application process is tricky, it has a high denial rate, and it requires older adults to re-apply every year. Even though there is a re-determination mandate on the books, it’s not in law, and appears to be inconsistently executed across the state.

Home energy costs are a major expense for U.S. households. Price increases have a greater impact on older consumers and households with lower incomes. Too often, older adults with low incomes must choose between cutting back on energy expenditures and reducing spending for other necessities. They may end up risking their health or comfort.

When home energy prices are high or unpredictable, older adults may be unable to adequately cool and heat their homes. Such exposure can lead to a host of adverse health outcomes. These

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can range from the aggravation of chronic health conditions to food spoilage and even premature death.

Regulators and lawmakers should ensure that consumers with low incomes can afford their utilities. This includes telecommunications, energy, and water. Utility assistance programs should ensure that all who qualify can receive assistance. And when possible, we encourage policymakers to strengthen outreach and education for these programs to make it easier for older adults to get access to assistance programs.

**We believe SB719 will:**

- Help more low-income seniors keep their heat and lights on.
- Help more low-income seniors age in place by not placing undue burdens on people 65 and older to re-visit a local office to re-apply when their household's income and number living in household's stay often stay the same.
- Offer Maryland a more efficient process for administering a grant program.
- Help older adults who may be frail, sick, or suffering dementia or memory issues get automatic alerts from the state for redetermination.

For these reasons AARP Maryland asks the Committee for Favorable report on SB 719. For follow up or questions, please contact Tammy Bresnahan at [tbresnahan@aar.org](mailto:tbresnahan@aar.org) or by calling 410-302-8451,

**SB0719\_DHS\_LOI.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Davon Gardner

Position: INFO

**DATE:** March 1, 2022

**BILL NUMBER:** SB 719

**COMMITTEE:** Finance

**BILL TITLE:** Human Services – Office of Home Energy Programs – Uniform Redetermination

**DHS POSITION:** Letter of Information

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The Department of Human Services (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of information regarding Senate Bill (SB 719). SB 719 requires the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) within the Family Investment Administration (FIA) to develop a uniform redetermination process, to assist eligible energy customers who are at least 65 years old in enrolling in energy assistance programs.

OHEP’s current redetermination process is designed to ease the administrative burden faced by disabled applicants as well as applicants over the age of 65 who previously received benefits and whose income and living arrangements are unlikely to change year over year. This bill would open participation in the redetermination process to households with varying income.

The Department is currently working on technology updates as part of OHEP’s integration with the new Eligibility & Enrollment (E&E) system. While the current redetermination process is executed at the Local Administering Agency (LAA) level, automated redetermination distribution will be a feature of the OHEP system in E&E. Once transitioned, OHEP’s redetermination process will incorporate best-practices gathered from other programs, such as SNAP, including automated notice mailings and uniform implementation of the redetermination process.

The Department estimates that implementation of this bill would require 24 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions (one FTE for each Local Department of Social Services), creating a fiscal impact of \$1.5 million in FY 2023 and an annual estimate of \$1.8 million thereafter. In addition, there will be a cost of mileage for the home visits which cannot be determined at this time.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to share the aforementioned information regarding SB 719 and respectfully requests this information be taken into account during the Committee’s deliberations.

