



HB139

Landlord and Tenant - Office of Home Energy Programs - Financial Assistance

Testimony before Environment and Transportation Committee

Hearing January 30, 2024, 2:00 pm

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Delegate Korman, Delegate Boyce, and members of the committee, my name is Elizabeth Fixsen, and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in support of HB139. This bill will enable renters to receive the benefits available from the Maryland Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP). We thank Delegate Charkoudian for sponsoring this bill.

Households whose utility payments are included in their rents qualify for certain OHEP programs as well homeowners. This payment is then credited towards rent for the tenant.

Most landlords have engaged with the program, to the benefit of their tenants. Unfortunately, some landlords have chosen not to accept the payments, which has prevented households from being able to access the vital supports that OHEP offers.

This bill will:

- ✓ Require landlords to accept financial assistance from OHEP on behalf of tenants who qualify and apply for their programs
- ✓ When necessary, require landlords to provide tenants with utility service documentation (at no cost) in order for the tenants to fill out the application materials for OHEP programs
- ✓ Impose fines for landlords who do not comply with these regulations

Overall, Energy Assistance through OHEP programs and grants help to ensure that low-income household in Maryland can receive the help they need to pay heating and electric bills. This bill will ensure that low-income renters also benefit from the program. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Elizabeth Fixsen
Savage, MD