



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

February 17, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman, Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 648 - OFFICE OF HOME ENERGY PROGRAMS - UNIFORM
REDETERMINATION PROCESS - AGE - POSITION: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill (HB) 648.

With offices in every Maryland jurisdiction, DHS provides preventive and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment and career opportunities to help Marylanders reach their full potential. Our Family Investment Administration (FIA) administers critical energy assistance for low-income households through the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP), which is affected by HB 648.

[Maryland Human Services Article § 5-5A-09](#), enacted in 2022, required that OHEP develop and update annually a uniform redetermination process to assist eligible customers who are at least 65 years old in enrolling in energy assistance programs. OHEP customers who do not qualify for the uniform redetermination process must either reapply for energy assistance every year or be approved through categorical eligibility. The redetermination process reduces administrative barriers older adults face when submitting energy assistance applications. Qualifying households are mailed a simplified, one-page form rather than the standard OHEP application. HB 648 would expand the availability of this redetermination process to households with members ages 60-64, allowing more older adults to access this streamlined process.

Lowering the redetermination age to 60 aligns the uniform redetermination process with federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) reporting requirements. LIHEAP's [authorizing statute](#) requires the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) collect data on "the number of households which received such assistance [LIHEAP] and include one or more individuals who are 60 years or older or disabled or include young children." Per [LIHEAP reporting guidance from HHS](#), these groups are considered "vulnerable populations." DHS believes that aligning our redetermination process with the federal definition of "vulnerable populations" is in the best interest of Marylanders.

HB 648 is a fiscally responsible measure with no expected impact on energy assistance benefit expenditures. OHEP expects approximately 1,760 additional households with members between 60 and 64 years old would be newly-eligible for the redetermination process in FY 2027. To be clear, these households already receive OHEP assistance, and this bill simply gives them access to the streamlined redetermination process.

Finally, HB 648 reduces the administrative burden and documentation hurdles that frequently lead to a lapse in energy assistance. Extending the simplified redetermination path ensures that eligible households with members aged 60-64 are processed and protected before peak seasonal demand, preventing dangerous utility shut-offs and stabilizing energy costs for older adults. This proactive shift will help protect the health and safety of Maryland's aging population.

For these reasons, DHS respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 648. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony for the Committee's consideration. If additional information is needed, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at justin.hayes1@maryland.gov.

In service,



Rafael López
Secretary