

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 907
Finance

(Senator Benson)

Economic Matters

Human Services - Critical Medical Needs Program - Application for Assistance

This bill requires the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) to allow a critical medically vulnerable individual, who is at least 60 years old and assisted by a navigator, to provide certification from a medical provider of a severe health condition within 90 days after applying for the Critical Medical Needs Program (CMNP). **The bill takes effect June 1, 2021.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The change is technical in nature and does not directly affect governmental finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: “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 Program

Chapters 282 and 283 of 2019 formally established CMNP in the Department of Human Services (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.

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.

Certification of Serious Illness

Per Maryland regulations, a complete CMNP application must include a completed certification of serious illness *or* need for life support equipment form that must include (1) a certification made by a licensed physician or certified nurse practitioner; (2) the name and address of the seriously ill person; (3) a statement that the seriously ill person or person in need of life-support equipment is the applicant or occupant of the premises in which the applicant resides; (4) specified contact information and signature of the certifying physician or certified nurse practitioner; and (5) a statement that termination of energy source service will aggravate a serious illness or prevent the use of life-support equipment.

Additional Comments: As of November 2020, there were a total of 264 navigators available to assist individuals through this program. In total, DHS reports 177 applications were submitted in fiscal 2020 and 2021 (through mid-November) with the assistance of navigators.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: HB 945 (Delegate Carey) - Economic Matters.

Information Source(s): Department of Human Services; Office of People's Counsel;
Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 10, 2021
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