

# HOUSE BILL 138

O1, C5

(PRE-FILED)

2lr0960  
CF 2lr1407

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By: **Delegate Charkoudian**

Requested: October 26, 2021

Introduced and read first time: January 12, 2022

Assigned to: Economic Matters

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Department of Human Services – Electric Universal Service Program –**  
3 **Eligibility**

4 FOR the purpose of requiring the Department of Human Services to authorize benefits  
5 under the electric universal service program for certain electric customers; and  
6 generally relating to the electric universal service program.

7 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

8 Article – Public Utilities

9 Section 7–512.1(a)

10 Annotated Code of Maryland

11 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

12 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
13 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

14 **Article – Public Utilities**

15 7–512.1.

16 (a) (1) The Commission shall establish an electric universal service program  
17 to assist electric customers with annual incomes:

18 (i) at or below 175% of the federal poverty level; or

19 (ii) for a customer at least 67 years of age, at or below 200% of the  
20 federal poverty level.

21 (2) The components of the electric universal service program shall include:

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (i) bill assistance;

2 (ii) low-income residential weatherization; and

3 (iii) the retirement of arrearages for electric customers who have not  
4 received assistance in retiring arrearages under the universal service program within the  
5 preceding 5 fiscal years.

6 (3) The Department of Housing and Community Development is  
7 responsible for administering the low-income residential weatherization component of the  
8 electric universal service program.

9 (4) (i) The Department of Human Services, through the Office of Home  
10 Energy Programs, is responsible for administering the bill assistance and the arrearage  
11 retirement components of the electric universal service program.

12 (ii) The Department of Human Services may:

13 1. establish minimum and maximum benefits available to an  
14 electric customer under the bill assistance and arrearage retirement components; and

15 2. coordinate benefits under the electric universal service  
16 program with benefits under the Maryland Energy Assistance Program and other available  
17 energy assistance programs.

18 **(III) THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES SHALL**  
19 **AUTHORIZE BENEFITS UNDER THE ELECTRIC UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROGRAM FOR**  
20 **AN ELECTRIC CUSTOMER WHO DOES NOT MEET THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**  
21 **FOR THE FEDERAL LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.**

22 (5) The Department of Human Services may, with input from a panel or  
23 roundtable of interested parties, contract to assist in administering the bill assistance and  
24 the arrearage retirement components of the electric universal service program.

25 (6) The Commission has oversight responsibility for the bill assistance and  
26 the arrearage retirement components of the electric universal service program and any  
27 other funds expended under this section.

28 (7) In a specific case, the electric universal service program may waive the  
29 income eligibility limitation under paragraph (1) of this subsection in order to provide  
30 assistance to an electric customer who would qualify for a similar waiver under the  
31 Maryland Energy Assistance Program established under Title 5, Subtitle 5A of the Human  
32 Services Article.

33 (8) (i) If an applicant for bill assistance or arrearage retirement is to be  
34 denied due to deficient documentation, the Department of Human Services shall:

1                                   1.     promptly provide notice of the deficiency to the applicant;  
2 and

3                                   2.     afford the applicant ample opportunity of not less than 3  
4 months to cure the deficiency.

5                                   (ii)    An electric company may not begin the process to terminate  
6 service to an applicant while the applicant is curing a deficiency under this paragraph.

7                                   (9)    Notwithstanding paragraph (2)(iii) of this subsection, any assistance  
8 received for arrearage retirement by a customer in calendar years 2020 and 2021 may not  
9 be counted toward the limitation on the number of times the customer may receive  
10 assistance for arrearage retirement.

11                                   SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
12 October 1, 2022.