SENATE BILL 719

By: Senator Benson
Introduced and read first time: February 7, 2022
Assigned to: Finance

A BILL ENTITLED

AN ACT concerning
Human Services – Office of Home Energy Programs – Uniform Redetermination Process

FOR the purpose of requiring the Office of Home Energy Programs to develop a certain redetermination process to assist certain eligible energy customers who are at least a certain age in enrolling in energy assistance programs; and generally relating to the Office of Home Energy Programs and energy assistance programs.

BY renumbering
Article – Human Services
Section 5–5A–09
to be Section 5–5A–10
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2019 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Article – Human Services
Section 5–5A–01(d)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2019 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

BY adding to
Article – Human Services
Section 5–5A–09
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2019 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That Section(s) 5–5A–09 of Article – Human Services of the Annotated Code of Maryland be renumbered to be Section(s) 5–5A–10.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.
SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Human Services

5–5A–01.

(d) “Office” means the Office of Home Energy Programs.

5–5A–09.

(A) (1) The Office shall develop a uniform re-determination process to assist eligible energy customers who are at least 65 years old in enrolling in energy assistance programs.

(2) The re-determination process developed under paragraph (1) of this subsection shall be updated annually.

(B) The re-determination process shall require local administering agencies to:

(1) have an accessible location to receive eligible energy customers’ applications according to the Office’s contractual or program requirements; and

(2) establish a policy reflecting reasonable accommodations for applicants who are homebound or request accommodation, including by:

(I) arranging for a home visit; or

(II) allowing an individual to apply on the behalf of an eligible energy customer.

(C) The Office shall provide notice of the re-determination process to all eligible energy customers and include with the notice an addressed envelope with prepaid postage.

(D) In addition to the notice required under subsection (C) of this section, the Office shall:

(1) require yearly verification of status for each customer that qualifies for the re-determination process;
(2) ALLOW AN ELIGIBLE ENERGY CUSTOMER 45 DAYS TO RESPOND TO A REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION; AND

(3) MAINTAIN RECORDS ORGANIZED BY COUNTY, INCLUDING RECORDS ON THE NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS DURING THE PREVIOUS YEAR:

(I) THAT WERE ELIGIBLE FOR REDETERMINATION;

(II) WHOSE NOTICE OF THE REDETERMINATION PROCESS WAS VERIFIED AND RETURNED; AND

(III) THAT WERE REENROLLED IN THE REDETERMINATION PROCESS.

(E) THE OFFICE MAY NOT REQUIRE A NEW APPLICATION FOR A CURRENT ENERGY CUSTOMER WHOSE ELIGIBILITY HAS NOT CHANGED FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

(F) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1 EACH YEAR, THE OFFICE SHALL REPORT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2–1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE INFORMATION COLLECTED UNDER SUBSECTION (D)(3) OF THIS SECTION.

(G) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THIS SECTION.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2022.