

NED CAREY
Legislative District 31A
Anne Arundel County

Economic Matters Committee

Subcommittees

Alcoholic Beverages

Chair, Unemployment Insurance

House Chair

Joint Committee on

Unemployment Insurance Oversight



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 161
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3047 • 301-858-3047
800-492-7122 Ext. 3047
Ned.Carey@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB 969 - Home Energy Assistance - Critical Medical Needs Program –
Power to the People Pilot Program**

SPONSOR TESTIMONY

Cross-file: **SB 846**

House Economic Matters Committee, February 11, 2021

Chairman Davis, Vice Chair Dumais and Members of the Committee,

House Bill 969 is a bill that will establish a pilot program to help further the reach of a current program put in place in 2019. This bill is a reintroduction of a bill that was passed not only by this Committee in 2020, but also in the House and the Senate. It came back from the Senate, but early dismissal stopped it from going to the Governor.

I am grateful to the Committee for their positive support in 2019 for HB 1189 **Home Energy Assistance - Critical Medical Needs Program** that was passed and enacted. It formalized a program that had been a successful pilot designed to ensure individuals with critical medical needs would get the necessary assistance and access to available funds to keep their electricity on – in many cases it has been lifesaving.

The program, run by OHEP, is working well, and we currently have approximately 350 navigators that provide this service to those Maryland citizens in need. However, there are many individuals in areas that have no trained navigators. While financial assistance is available to any Marylander that fits the qualifications, access is a huge stumbling block. It is heartbreaking to hear of individuals in dire need not getting assistance that is available simply because we can't get to them.

We are proposing a three-year pilot program to address this gap. Cindy Carter of the Cancer Support Foundation, the Fuel Fund of Maryland and the 211 MD United Way, have designed "Power to People" – a program that will provide a core staff of paid navigators through 211 MD, who are in an excellent position to help eligible individuals obtain energy assistance by phone and through in-home visits.

The pilot program outline is attached. Please review it, and I encourage you to read the written testimonies by the experts behind this program; the case is compelling and the outcome worthwhile.

I respectfully ask for a favorable report on HB 969.