



Cancer Support Foundation, Inc.
8268 Academy Road
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Phone: 410.964.9563
Email: info@cancersupportfoundation.org

www.cancersupportfoundation.org

Finance Committee

SB907

Support

Cancer Support Foundation
Cindy Carter Executive Director

I am Cindy Carter the Co-Founder of the Critical Medical Needs Program (CMNP) as well as Executive Director of Cancer Support Foundation here today in favor of SB907.

CMNP was passed into law in 2019 and has proven so far to be very successful to those who are able to access the program. Access to the program for our clients who are 60 years old and above is why I am here today.

This group is amongst the most vulnerable group of citizens who are trying to get the grants offered each year through the state energy assistance programs. These grants as well as helping with keeping the lights and heat on also helps with programs that assist with repair and or replacement of appliances in homes.

CMNP was created because those who were medically challenged had so many barriers to the application process with the regular avenue to apply for Office of Energy Home program (OHEP) grants. CMNP was created to overcome those barriers and is very successful with working with this group of citizens. This addition to CMNP would help with reducing a barrier to those 60 years and older.



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To participate in the program a client needs to have medical issues and work with a trained Navigator. A Physicians' Certification is needed to be signed by a medical provider of the client as well. This certificate indicates that power needs to be kept on because of a medical challenge.

In the sixteen years that we have been in business, we have found that in general those who are 60 years old plus usually need more hand holding to get through the application process. The backup documents that are needed for this process are usually in the home ie photo id social security cards. The Physician's Certification is a form that needs to be given to a doctor's office to be signed and then back to the client. Many times, this requires a physical back and forth since many clients do not have the technology to accomplish. In this time with the pandemic this process has been even harder. To compound the issue if you have tried to contact a physician's office lately, you will know that customer service has become more of a challenge.

The majority of the Navigators included in this program which is approximately 300 and growing, do an excellent job at making sure that the OHEP applications submitted in CMNP are complete. The Navigators are doing most of the work on these applications thus making the rest of the processing run very smoothly for the CMNP Team on the state level.

Allowing the 60 plus group of clients to be able to work with the Navigators and not have to provide a Physician's Certification up front would make this program work more efficiently and not jeopardize the integrity of CMNP. It makes sense in the world that seniors are living in now.

There is an amendment that would allow the physicians certification to be obtained within 90 days after the application is done. This keeps these clients within the requirements of CMNP but allows for the special situations that many 60 plus client's face.

For several years before CMNP became law in 2019 Cancer Support Foundation and Office of Peoples Counsel were the organizations that requested from the utility companies 30 day medical holds for everyone in the program. About a third of all clients needed them. Our groups of trained Navigators would call with situations where the client was about to lose their power. Families were in a crisis and the applications could not be entered and a 55 day hold placed quickly enough. Many of these clients had already used up their 7-10 day extensions granted by the utility companies. These 30 day holds were placed before physicians certifications came in with the application.



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This bill makes it easier for Navigators to work with those who are 60 yr and over. This bill only applies to those who are working with Navigators in CMNP.

Once CMNP passed into law and the processing was done in a centralized location, we have very few 30 day medical holds required. Navigators are able to get the applications in and a 55 day hold if needed is applied before the grants are processed. Getting a 30 day medical hold is not effected by when a physicians certification comes in during the application process.

SB907 is a necessary addition to CMNP that helps our most vulnerable, our seniors. These clients are required to work with the trained Navigators in CMNP so we feel that the integrity of the program is not being jeopardized. We are asking for a favorable report on SB907.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cindy Carter".

Cindy Carter
Executive Director
Cancer Support Foundation