

FAVORABLE SB907

Human Services - Critical Medical Needs Program - Application for Assistance

Laurel Peltier, March 11, 2021

Thank you, Chairwoman Kelley, co-chair Feldman and members of the Senate Finance Committee.

I'm a Critical Medical Needs Program Navigator (CMNP) volunteer in Baltimore City through the GEDO CARES community center. This program piggybacks the OHEP application program and is designed to help residents who have serious health issues get energy assistance faster with the help of a person who can ensure their application is correct, all of the verification documents are included (you would not believe how many people don't have them all).

The biggest CMNP benefit a sick person gets is faster access to utility bill grants because their OHEP application doesn't churn through the normal process. CMNP applications are sent into the state office and processed super-fast.

I can share that the seniors I work with are technically challenged. I mean no smart phones, no wi-fi, no printers, no PCs, pretty much no tech. They live a lo-tech world and in order to get their Physician's Certification signed, they would use the USPS, mail in the certificate and then wait for it to be returned through USPS. Or, maybe faxed to the navigator. And many are really sick.

I will share a story of a gentleman who qualified for CMNP. After 4 calls into Healthcare for the Homeless, 3 faxes and getting to know a great lady at the Director of Records, the physician's

certificate was faxed back to CARES. It took 4 weeks, and nothing was getting in the way of the certificate.

But, that's a lot to ask of navigators who help CMNP clients because they want to help.

Navigators are trained on all the details of CMNP, how to do the program right and when it's a regular OHEP application and when does one qualify for CMNP. Not having to get a Physician's Certificate for Seniors would ensure that all the CMNP applications go in, and don't get stopped because it's tough, if not impossible at times, to obtain a doctor signature on a paper form.

Thank you.