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Economic Matters

HB1001

Support

March 3, 2022

Cindy Carter
Cancer Support Foundation

Good afternoon chairman Wilson and committee. I am Cindy Carter Co-Founder of the Critical Medical Needs Program, Founder of the Power to the People Program and Executive Director of Cancer Support Foundation. I am here today in favor of HB1001 Uniform Redetermination Process. This bill will both strengthen an existing process as well as make some changes that help protect our seniors.

Seniors aging in place in Maryland is a big issue that is growing all of the time. Keeping the lights and heat on for our seniors is basic is being able to age safely in their homes.

Office of Home Energy Program (OHEP) has as part of their operations manual a program called Redetermination Process. This program allows for those who are 65 yrs. and above and are in the OHEP system to sign a verification letter each year that their household situation is the same. With that confirmation letter being signed OHEP will reprocess their energy assistance grants. Then after three years these clients need to do a new application.

This bill proposes changes to this process to protect our seniors in the state. The process is not consistent across all counties with some seniors getting this and others not. They seniors are identified but each local OHEP office can elect to send a Redetermination notice to those in that database. We are proposing that this process be mandated to be done in all counties and Baltimore City. We are also proposing that once a person is in this program that as long as their household situation has not changed that would trigger a new application that the current requirement for a every three-year new application requirement be dropped.



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Notice of the Redetermination Process to those who are eligible will come as an addressed envelope with prepaid postage so after the form is reviewed and signed to verify it will get back to the proper place to be processed.

As seniors age, many face increased health issues and asking them to refile a new application is more and more difficult. The OHEP system is not provide a customer service experience. Many seniors are left to find on their own help to find someone who can help them get through this process. The pandemic really illustrated the challenges with the process especially since many seniors do not use a computer.

If the household has had changes that require a new application, we will be introducing a plan to help these seniors get that done.

This change would allow those who are 65 yrs old and above, most of whom do not have household changes that would trigger a new application, be able to be protected, continuing to get the grants they need for their lights and heat.

Since the income threshold for those 67yrs old and above has changed to a higher figure there will be more seniors able to get these grants than ever before.

Since 41% of those in Maryland who are eligible for the grants are over 60 yrs old, this is a large group of citizens who need help and they are trying to deal with a system that is making it harder and harder for them to age safely in their homes.

We are urging a favorable report on HB1001 to help our seniors age safely in their homes with their lights and heat kept on.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cindy Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cindy Carter
Co-Founder Critical Medical Needs Program
Executive Director Cancer Support Foundation, Inc.