

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 998 - Human Services – Silver Energy Savers Program and Energy Assistance Fund

SPONSOR TESTIMONY

Cross-file: SB 905

House Economic Matters Committee, March 3, 2021

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby and Members of the Committee,

House Bill 998 addresses access to energy assistance grants for seniors. For the purposes of this bill and the proposed program, a senior is anyone 60 years of age and above.

Grants available to pay for the utility bills of qualifying seniors have significant positive impact on their health, welfare and housing security. Currently, 41% of Marylanders eligible for energy assistance grants are 60 yrs. old and above, yet only a little more than a third of seniors that apply actually have access to the funds because of incomplete applications.

The application process is cumbersome and has too many obstacles to successful completion and submission. Some of the biggest hurdles are the requirement of individuals to physically go to an OHEP office and to provide backup documents that the individual may not have on hand.

This bill provides customer service call centers to help seniors navigate the paperwork and the process for submitting an application to Office of Home Energy Program (OHEP) system.

2-1-1 will provide four Designated Centers in Maryland: Southern Maryland, Eastern Shore, Central Maryland, and Western Maryland.

This service will assist seniors with the entire process. Among other things, the call center will process the paperwork and work with the local OHEP offices, they will work with the applicant to help them understand and answer application questions correctly, help them obtain missing documents, and provide for a telephonic signature, which is necessary in cases where the individual can't get transportation to an OHEP office.

In summary, this bill ensures that anyone over 60 that is eligible is able to access the funds available to them to assist with paying their bills and keeping them from making a decision between utilities and other essentials such as food and medication.

For this reason, I request a favorable report for HB 988.