

United Way of Central Maryland
1800 Washington Boulevard, Suite 340
Baltimore, MD 21230
tel 410.547.8000
fax 410.547.8289
www.uwcm.org



211 Maryland United Way Helpline

Written Testimony in Support of HB 998 Home Energy Assistance – Silver Energy Savings Program

Economic Matters Committee

March 1, 2022

Thank you, Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair Crosby, and the Economic Matters Committee members. My name is Franklyn Baker. I am the President and CEO of United Way of Central Maryland, which houses the 211 Maryland United Way Helpline that serves central Maryland.

211 Maryland United Way Helpline strongly supports HB 998, which allows the Silver Energy Savings program to reduce barriers for seniors 60 years and older. This bill will expand the reach of those seeking assistance for home energy programs.

211 is a number people can call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days in the year, in over 150 languages, and speak to a live person when facing a crisis and need help. There are four 211 call centers in Maryland. The largest call center is operated by United Way and serves the central Maryland region, including Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard Counties. Last year we received over 146,463 calls from Maryland residents in need. Due to the pandemic, our callers requesting medically related assistance such as COVID test sites and public health information increased 95%. The governor dedicated 211 as the number to call statewide on COVID-19 resources and the governor's declarations. With that, we saw the most significant increase in need surrounding medical, food, housing, and utilities for Marylanders.

HB 998 will allow 211 Maryland United Way Helplines to expand their role when dealing with crisis callers. 211 Maryland United Way Helpline will not only help close the gap of those in need over the phone but connect them to other resources that your constituents faced, such as food and housing stabilization that has increased due to COVID-19.

United Way of Central Maryland

1800 Washington Boulevard, Suite 340
Baltimore, MD 21230
tel 410.547.8000
fax 410.547.8289
www.uwcm.org



All of our staff at 211 have a background in social work or counseling. We are certified by the Alliance for Information and Referral Services (AIRS), the highest certification available for information and referral providers in the human services industry. We also have staff that has been certified through AIRS as Community Resource Specialist – Aging and Disability (CRS-A/D) specialists. We are primed to take on the role of default navigator for eligible seniors 60 years and older.

On behalf of 211 Maryland United Way Helpline serving central Maryland, I strongly encourage the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 998. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Franklyn Baker".

Franklyn Baker
President and CEO
United Way of Central Maryland