



Finance Committee SB 719 - Favorable Response

Thank you, Madam Chair Kelley and members of the Finance Committee. My name is Sam Impink, and I am the Utility Assistance Director at the Fuel Fund of Maryland.

I am here today testifying on behalf of the Fuel Fund of Maryland **in support of SB 719**.

The Redetermination process for potentially receiving Office of Home Energy (known as OHEP) grants is already in place. However, not all jurisdictions prioritize the process. Passing **SB 719** would require **ALL** jurisdictions to follow the designated procedures regarding seniors and redetermining their eligibility for an OHEP grant. The Fuel Fund of Maryland has encountered too many seniors not able to complete the energy assistance process with OHEP because of offices not seeing individuals in person. When a senior is denied the opportunity to visit an OHEP office in person, they are forced to complete the energy assistance process digitally. Unfortunately, too many seniors struggle with the digital divide and their journey with the OHEP process fails.

By having OHEP mail a one-page letter to the senior verifying if anything in their household has changed from the previous year, the senior is empowered to sign the confirmation letter and return (in a postage paid envelope). This simple, yet effective process will increase the number of seniors receiving energy assistance from OHEP. More importantly, the senior will not need to complete this process every three years. One and done! Additionally, the State can receive timely data from the Department of Social Security on deceased clients which will reduce fraud of this process.

The Fuel Fund of Maryland would like to recommend that the State OHEP office be responsible for the mailing of the redetermination letters and not rely on each authority to mail out the letters to the senior households. Please note that the signed document with the returned envelope would be directed to the proper jurisdiction not the State OHEP office. By doing so, the redetermination process will be more timely, efficient, and effective.



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Again, the Fuel Fund of Maryland is in support of making the redetermination process uniform for all jurisdictions that manage energy assistance applications.

On behalf of the Fuel Fund of Maryland, I respectfully urge a favorable report for **SB 719**. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sam Impink

Sam Impink, Utility Assistance Director

2/28/22

Date