

2022-SB283_PHI Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Alexis Gallagher

Position: FAV



An Exelon Company



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February 1, 2022

112 West Street
Annapolis, MD 21401
410-269-7115

FAVORABLE – Senate Bill 283
Department of Human Services – Electric Universal Service Program - Eligibility

Senate Bill 283 requires the Department of Human Services to authorize benefits under the electric universal service program for a low income electric customer who does not meet the eligibility requirements for the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Pepco and Delmarva understand that the bill language will be clarified to apply only to low income customers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected customers and communities across our service areas. Because of this, Pepco and Delmarva Power have taken extensive steps since March of 2020 to assist customers, including temporarily suspending service disconnections, waiving late fees, reconnecting customers who lost service prior to the pandemic, where safe to do so, offering extended payment plans, and enhancing outreach and engagement to customers regarding energy assistance options available from the companies as well as state, local and non-profit organizations. Senate Bill 283 will expand assistance to low income customers during the pandemic and beyond.

Expanding energy assistance to the most vulnerable populations in the state will help keep customers connected and Pepco and Delmarva Power support that approach. For the above reasons Pepco and Delmarva Power support Senate Bill 283 and respectfully request a favorable committee report.

Contact:

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SB0283_EUSP_MLC_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR SB0283

Department of Human Services - Electric Universal Service Program - Eligibility

Bill Sponsor: Senator Washington

Committee: Finance

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0283 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

There are two significant energy assistance programs in Maryland, managed by the Department of Human Services. The Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) and the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) both assist low-income Marylanders in paying their energy bills. However, the eligibility requirements are not identical between the two programs, and it is confusing for residents to know what program they qualify for.

This bill will help more Maryland families access utility assistance by requiring DHS to establish a process for Marylanders who are eligible for EUSP, but not eligible for MEAP, to apply for and receive utility assistance from EUSP. By requiring OHEP to establish procedures for households to access EUSP for those who are not eligible for MEAP, this bill ensures struggling households will receive assistance, as intended.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

SB0283 OPC Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Endia Montgomery

Position: FAV

DAVID S. LAPP
PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

WILLIAM F. FIELDS
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

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BRANDI NIELAND
DIRECTOR, CONSUMER
ASSISTANCE UNIT

BILL NO.: Senate Bill 283
Department of Human Services - Electric Universal Service
Program – Eligibility

COMMITTEE: Finance

HEARING DATE: February 1, 2022

SPONSOR: Senator Washington

POSITION: Support

The Office of People’s Counsel supports SB 283. The legislation ensures that all qualifying customers that pay into the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) are also able to benefit from the program.

The Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) provides utility bill assistance to eligible households to make their energy costs more affordable and to prevent loss of home energy services. OHEP utilizes four grants from different funding sources that each have varying levels of documentation requirements for applicants. The programs covered by these funding sources include Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP), EUSP, and electric and gas arrearage retirement assistance.

Under these programs, OHEP distributes grant money made available by the Federal Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) through the Maryland Strategic Investment Fund, and utility customers. Although these programs require varying levels of documentation depending on the grant-funding source, OHEP screens all applicants under the program with the most stringent criteria—MEAP, which, along with other documentation, requires a social security number under LIHEAP funding requirements. SB 283 requires OHEP to separate the MEAP and EUSP application process to allow applicants to receive assistance from the EUSP grant without using a social security number.

EUSP is funded by utility ratepayer fees and RGGI. Tying this State-funded grant to federally funded grants with different documentation standards leaves behind some residential customers who need help. The documentation standards for EUSP include applicant identification, proof of income for everyone in the household, proof of residence, and a current utility bill. If a person does not have a social security number or does not wish to share it they cannot access assistance through OHEP—even though they pay into EUSP through their monthly utility bill.

EUSP is an important component of assistance for income-eligible households as it directly lessens the energy burden of income-qualifying households. EUSP first pays down old bills and then spreads out the remaining dollars to be applied monthly to the customer's account to make their bill more affordable. SB 283 will allow all residential customers who pay into EUSP to apply and benefit from EUSP.

Recommendation: OPC requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 283.

MAP_SB 283_Support_Electric Universal Service Prog

Uploaded by: Julia Gross

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 283

Department of Human Services - Electric Universal Service Program – Eligibility

Senate Finance Committee
February 1, 2022

Submitted by Julia Gross and Kali Schumitz, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

211 Maryland

Advocates for Children and Youth

Baltimore Jewish Council

Behavioral Health System Baltimore

CASH Campaign of Maryland

Catholic Charities

Energy Advocates

Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

Family League of Baltimore

Fuel Fund of Maryland

Health Care for the Homeless

Homeless Persons

Representation Project

Job Opportunities Task Force

Laurel Advocacy & Referral Services,
Inc.

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Loyola University Maryland

Maryland Catholic Conference

Maryland Center on Economic Policy

Maryland Community Action
Partnership

Maryland Family Network

Maryland Food Bank

Maryland Hunger Solutions

Paul's Place

Public Justice Center

St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore

Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

Julia Gross, Co-Chair

P: 410-528-0021 ext 6029

E: jgross@mdhungersolutions.org

Kali Schumitz, Co-Chair

P: 410-412- 9105 ext 701

E: kschumitz@mdeconomy.org

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports SB 283, which requires the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) to establish a process that allows all income qualified Marylanders to access the state funded Electric Universal Service Program in order to expand access to critical utility assistance to low-income Marylanders.

Currently, the Office of Home Energy Programs within DHS requires Marylanders to use one consolidated application process to apply for both major utility assistance programs offered by the state. While this process greatly aids in convenience and streamlining for households that qualify for both programs, it unintentionally bars eligible households who qualify for the state funded Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) but not the federally funded Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP). This is because MEAP requires that Maryland use federally established eligibility requirements, which are stricter and more limiting than the state's EUSP.

With the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more Marylanders are forced to rely on public safety net programs to meet their basic needs. While EUSP was established to be widely available to households that meet the income guidelines in statute, the current consolidated application process means that eligible families are losing out on critically needed electricity bill credits that they are rightfully eligible to receive.

SB 283 aims to fix this issue by establishing a more equitable process to ensure low-income Marylanders who are eligible for EUSP, but not eligible for MEAP, still receive the assistance they need, as intended.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 283.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.

WA- SB 283 - EUSP - Fav.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Lisa Kligenmaier

Position: FAV



Welfare Advocates

Founded 1979

228 W. Lexington Street — Suite 220 • Baltimore, Maryland 21201-3432
Phone: 410.261.5874 • Fax: 410.889.0203

Senate Bill 283

Department of Human Services – Electric Universal Service Program - Eligibility

Senate Finance Committee

February 1, 2022

Support

Welfare Advocates is a statewide coalition of social service organizations, advocacy groups, faith communities, and community members, whose mission it is to educate ourselves, and the wider community and to advocate for an adequate safety net and public policies that support families moving towards economic stability.

Welfare Advocates supports SB 283, which requires the Department of Human Services to create a separate application and authorization process for the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) unlinked to the their processes related to the Federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Energy Assistance is a critical safety-net program for low-income households overburdened with energy costs in Maryland. The Electric Universal Service Program is one of two major energy assistance programs in Maryland, and it is partially funded through a utility rate payer surcharge. EUSP is disbursed as a grant credited to the household electricity bill in 12 monthly credits, and is paid directly to qualified electric utilities.

EUSP was designed to be widely available to households that meet the income requirements; however, because the current application process is consolidated with the application for Federal LIHEAP, many Maryland households are – literally – left out in the cold. While consolidated applications are great for households who meet qualifications for several programs, it is an enormous barrier for households who may only qualify for a single program. Requiring DHS to establish a separate application process for households who only qualify for our state EUSP will ensure more low-income households in Maryland struggling to pay for their energy needs will be able to access assistance. Without this critical change, there will continue to be low-income families in Maryland facing impossible decisions about which basic need – like power or heat – they will forgo in their limited budgets.

All Maryland rate-payer households in who need energy assistance through EUSP should be able to access the state-funded program, regardless of if they are eligible for federally funded benefits. **WA appreciates your consideration, and respectfully urges a favorable report on SB 283.**

Submitted by Lisa Klingenmaier, Chair of Welfare Advocates

Amendment SB0283-393225-01.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Washington

Position: FAV



SB0283/393225/1

AMENDMENTS
PREPARED
BY THE
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES

28 JAN 22
08:51:49

BY: Senator Washington
(To be offered in the Finance Committee)

AMENDMENT TO SENATE BILL 283
(First Reading File Bill)

On page 2, in line 19, after “**WHO**” insert “:

1.”;

and in line 20, after “**PROGRAM**” insert “;**AND**

2. **HAS AN ANNUAL INCOME:**

A. **IF THE CUSTOMER IS UNDER THE AGE OF 67 YEARS,**
AT OR BELOW 175% OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL; OR

B. **IF THE CUSTOMER IS AT LEAST 67 YEARS OLD, AT**
OR BELOW 200% OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL”.

Letter from Former Chariman Davis to Secretary Pad

Uploaded by: Mary Washington

Position: FAV

Hon. Lourdes R. Padilla
Secretary
Maryland Department of Human Services
311 West Saratoga Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Secretary Padilla:

On February 22nd, the Economic Matters committee discussed at length *HB 606 — Emergency Bill — Electricity and Gas – Limited–Income Mechanisms and Assistance*. This emergency bill would authorize utility companies to adopt a limited-income mechanism to benefit eligible customers, subject to the approval of the Public Service Commission (PSC), thus expanding the methods available to alleviate the energy burden on Marylanders who struggle with economic insecurity. The bill has passed and is awaiting the Governor's signature.

As you know, Maryland statute established Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) to provide assistance with electricity bills, and to supplement funds provided by Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP), which comes from a larger block grant program funded by the Federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). These grants provide assistance to low-income households in the state of Maryland to help make their energy costs more affordable and to help with the prevention of loss and the restoration of home energy service.

In our Committee discussions on HB606, two specific concerns were raised about the existing programs in OHEP. It was determined that both of these issues can be addressed by regulatory or administrative changes and I am writing to ask you to make these changes to make these programs more accessible to struggling Marylanders.

1. **Make EUSP available to those who pay their electric bills through their condominium fee or rent:** Funds for EUSP are collected from all Maryland rate-payers, including those who pay their electric bills through their rent or condo fees. Yet the OHEP process to apply for and receive assistance only allows individuals who have a utility bill in their own name to apply for EUSP funds. OHEP has a process for those who pay their utilities through condo fees or rent to apply for MEAP. My request is that you extend this process to allow these individuals to apply for EUSP as well. This can be facilitated by changing the definition of “electric customer” in COMAR 07.03.22.02 to define an electric customer as any individual responsible for the costs of electric service regardless of how those electric costs are paid.

2. **Allow Marylanders to either apply for EUSP and MEAP together or to apply directly to EUSP without requiring the documentation required by LIHEAP:** Public Utilities Article 7-512.1 (A, 4) gives OHEP the ability to coordinate EUSP benefits, with benefits from MEAP and other assistance programs. The goal in this statute is to streamline the application process for Maryland residents seeking help. However, OHEP currently determines eligibility using the federal LIHEAP requirements. The result is that Maryland residents who should be eligible for EUSP benefits, but are not eligible for MEAP benefits, are not able to apply for any benefits. Specifically, households that do not have anyone with a social security number are not able to apply for LIHEAP funds. The current structure also excludes them from EUSP assistance. It was never the intention of the Maryland General Assembly to deny these households EUSP funds (which they also pay into every month with their electric bills). My request is that you modify COMAR 07.03.22.03 so that individuals with no one in their home meeting the LIHEAP criteria have the ability to apply for EUSP funds.

I look forward to hearing your plans to address these issues.

Sincerely,

Delegate Dereck E. Davis
Chair
Economic Matters Committee

cc:
Bill Freeman
Director, Office of Home Energy Programs

Response from Sec Padilla to Former Chairman Davis

Uploaded by: Mary Washington

Position: FAV

June 16, 2021

The Honorable Dereck Davis
Chair, Economic Matters Committee
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 231
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: House Bill 606 - Electricity and Gas - Limited-Income Mechanisms and Assistance

Dear Chair Davis:

Thank you for your letter dated April 29, 2021, and thank you for your continued leadership in ensuring that Marylanders have access to funding that provides access to affordable home energy. The changes affected by House Bill 606 will improve access to energy assistance and improve outcomes for households in need. The Department of Human Services (Department) looks forward to convening the Workgroup on Low-Income Utility Assistance to continue to develop constructive recommendations for increasing efficiency and improving outcomes for energy assistance programs offered by the state.

Regarding the specific requests for regulatory and administrative changes in your letter, the Department conducted an initial review of the regulations, policies, processes, and systems that require modification with the implementation of these changes. The initial response to these requests are outlined below.

- **Make EUSP available to those who pay their electric bills through their condominium fee or rent.**

The Department plans to expand EUSP eligibility to those applicants who are not directly responsible for paying their electric bill. The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 07.03.22.02 B(12) will be modified to define “electric customer” as an individual or household: 1) with an active retail electric service account in a household member’s name; 2) who is applying for retail electric service for the household; or 3) responsible for paying for electric service costs through rent or fees.

Given the timeline for the regulatory promulgation process, the Department anticipates that updated regulations will be effective by July 1, 2022. In addition to the regulatory changes, the Department’s Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) is modifying policy documents, forms, agency training, and the OHEP Data Management System to implement this change.

- **Give Marylanders the choice to apply either for EUSP and MEAP together or directly to EUSP without requiring the documentation required by LIHEAP.**



The Honorable Dereck Davis

Page 2

The Department is reviewing the request to remove the “qualified alien” requirement from EUSP eligibility from legal, fiscal, and program perspectives. The findings will be presented, and the issue addressed through the Workgroup on Low-Income Utility Assistance created by the HB 606 legislation. If you have any questions, please contact the Director of Government Affairs, Lauren C. Graziano, at 443-571-6452 or at laurenc.graziano@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lourdes R. Padilla". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lourdes R. Padilla
Secretary

Sen Washington Testimony SB283.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Washington

Position: FAV

MARY L. WASHINGTON, PH.D
Legislative District 43
Baltimore City

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair
Joint Committee on Ending
Homelessness

Chair
Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



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SB 283 – DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES – ELECTRIC UNIVERSAL
SERVICE PROGRAM- ELIGIBILITY

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR MARY WASHINGTON

FEBRUARY 1, 2022

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee,

There are over 90,000 households across the state that rely on support from the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) to keep their heat and lights on in difficult times. The OHEP manages two programs to administer this vital utility assistance.

The Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) is a federally funded program that supports low-income individuals with home heating bills. As such, it requires that Maryland use federally established eligibility guidelines including citizenship, residency, and income guidelines based on household size.

The Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) is a state program that is partially funded through a utility rate payer surcharge. It operates as a grant which is credited to the household electricity bill in 12 monthly credits. Maryland statute established the program to be widely available to every household that meets the income guidelines in the statute.

At present, OHEP uses one consolidated application process for both programs. However, using one application prevents households who are eligible for EUSP but not eligible for MEAP from accessing the EUSP assistance they are rightfully eligible to receive. When the General Assembly created EUSP it was intended for the program to be widely accessible. The intention was for all income qualified Marylanders to access utility assistance, regardless of immigration status.

This issue was discussed in the 2021 Session during committee discussions about SB392/HB606. Uploaded with my testimony is a letter from Former Chairman Dereck Davis to DHS Secretary Padilla which includes a request for the following change in the DHS regulations:

“Allow Marylanders to either apply for EUSP and MEAP together or to apply directly to EUSP without requiring the documentation required by LIHEAP: Public Utilities Article 7-512.1 (A, 4) gives OHEP the ability to coordinate EUSP benefits, with benefits from MEAP and other assistance programs. The goal in this statute is to streamline the application process for Maryland residents seeking help. However, OHEP currently determines eligibility using the federal LIHEAP requirements. The result is that Maryland residents who should be eligible for EUSP benefits, but are not eligible for MEAP benefits, are not able to apply for any benefits. Specifically, households that do not have anyone with a social security number are not able to apply for LIHEAP funds. The current structure also excludes them from EUSP assistance. It was never the intention of the Maryland General Assembly to deny these households EUSP funds (which they also pay into every month with their electric bills). My request is that you modify COMAR 07.03.22.03 so that individuals with no one in their home meeting the LIHEAP criteria have the ability to apply for EUSP funds.”

In Secretary Padilla’s response she indicated that the Department was reviewing the request, as quoted below:

“The Department is reviewing the request to remove the “qualified alien” requirement from EUSP eligibility from legal, fiscal, and program perspectives. The findings will be presented, and the issue addressed through the Workgroup on Low-Income Utility Assistance created by the HB 606 legislation.”

DHS and the Workgroup on Low-Income Utility Assistance have yet to act on this request, therefore, this legislation will establish a requirement for OHEP to allow Marylanders who qualify for EUSP funds under current statute to be able to access those funds.

I have included an amendment at the request of BGE, which the Office of People’s Council also supported. The amendment simply clarifies that the customer must meet income eligibility requirements, as we intended.

I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 283.

In Partnership,



Senator Mary Washington
Maryland 43rd District

SB0283_CC_Vaughan_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Regan Vaughan

Position: FAV

Senate Bill 283
Department of Human Services – Electric Universal Service Program - Eligibility

Finance Committee
February 1, 2022

Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports SB 283, which would require the Department of Human Services to allow individuals to apply separately for the Electric Universal Service Program and the Maryland Energy Assistance Program.

Inspired by the Gospel mandates to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. As the largest human service provider in Maryland working with tens of thousands of youth, individuals, and families each year, we recognize the inherent dignity within all Marylanders.

Since 1963, immigrants from all over the world have trusted the Esperanza Center, a Catholic Charities program, to help them navigate life in a new country. Through this work, we have witnessed the enormous contribution immigrant families make to our communities. Immigrant workers cultivate and harvest the food we eat, they construct the buildings we live in, they serve as domestic workers, and they offer their hospitality in restaurants and hotels. They are our neighbors and our friends. They are also taxpayers and ratepayers. Yet, when the pandemic struck, many were excluded from the economic relief programs. They didn't qualify for unemployment. They were not sent stimulus payments. Often, their occupations did not permit remote working. They either risked their health to continue working or risked the economic security of their families by following public health warnings to stay home.

Catholic Charities responded by adjusting our services and standing up two hotlines – one a bilingual hotline to assist Marylanders in accessing public benefits and the other to offer health advice and resources to non-English speakers. Through both hotlines we heard the heartbreaking stories of immigrant families trying to remain healthy while still trying to provide for their children. While we could refer callers to information about COVID-19 and to schedule testing, there were few programs we could refer callers to if no one in the household had a Social Security Number.

This bill recognizes that all ratepayers should be eligible for our state's Electric Universal Service Program. We should not be using federal standards established for a different program to determine eligibility for a program funded by Maryland ratepayers.

Our entire society suffers when there is economic instability amongst a segment of our neighbors—requiring DHS to apply only the statutory eligibility criteria for EUSP would help to keep the lights and heat on for all Marylanders. **On behalf of the individuals and families we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration of our views and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 283.**

Submitted By: Regan K. Vaughan, Director of Advocacy

CASH_SB 283- Department of Human Services- Electri

Uploaded by: Tonaeya Moore

Position: FAV



SB 283- Department of Human Services- Electric Universal Service Program- Eligibility
Senate Finance Committee
February 1, 2022
SUPPORT

Chairwoman Kelley, Vice-chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 283. This bill will require the Department of Human Services to authorize benefits under the electric universal service program for certain electric customers.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

There are two significant energy assistance programs in Maryland, managed by the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) in the Department of Human Services (DHS). The Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) and the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) both assist low-income Marylanders in paying their energy bills. OHEP uses one consolidated application process for both programs. However, two programs have slightly different eligibility requirements. Using one application prevents households who are eligible for EUSP but not eligible for MEAP from accessing EUSP assistance. Unfortunately, immigrant households are not eligible for many federal assistance programs. **By processing all applications using federal requirements, immigrant households are not eligible for the state energy assistance program they pay into.** All Maryland utilities accounts pay into EUSP; however, not all Maryland utilities account holders can access those funds if needed.

COVID-19 created a significant need for assistance for many low-income households across Maryland. The global pandemic lowered immigrant family's capability to cover their electricity cost in many ways. Main wage earners are more at risk for being exposed to COVID-19 or working for one of the many industries that were negatively affected by the pandemic. Children were attending school from home which also drove up expected energy costs. Not having access to electricity and energy assistance will leave families without access to heat/AC, safe food, medical equipment, and more essentials.

SB 283 will allow for more families to receive assistance by requiring DHS to establish a process for Marylanders who are eligible for EUSP, but not eligible for MEAP, to apply for and receive utility assistance from EUSP. Ultimately, this bill ensures that all Maryland households will receive energy assistance, as intended.

For these reasons, we encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 238.

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope