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Legislative District 20
Montgomery County

Economic Matters Committee

Subcommittees

Public Utilities

Chair, Unemployment Insurance



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 323- SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS- ELIGIBILITY AND ENROLLMENT
TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN

FEBRUARY 16, 2023

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

The current process for safety net services in Maryland is administratively burdensome for applicants and inefficient from a state agency perspective. Individuals who are eligible for safety net services currently have to complete multiple applications which are reviewed by different agencies. Most of these applications require identical documents. Many of these applications must also be resubmitted annually in order to prevent loss of coverage. Because of this complicated process, many Marylanders are not utilizing energy assistance programs even though they meet the eligibility requirements.

In 2021, the SNAP caseload in Maryland increased 8% to nearly 573,000 households¹. However, the most current figures report that only 84,079 households are currently receiving utility bill assistance.²

This bill streamlines the application in order to prevent families from missing out on supports due to needless, duplicative paperwork requirements. Specifically, this legislation automatically enrolls an applicant for utility assistance if they qualify for SNAP, TANF, SSI, or means-tested veteran's benefits. This legislation also increases the EUSP eligibility income limit to 200% FPL to match other basic assistance programs offered by the Department of Human Services for low-income families.

Streamlining these services simplifies administration of these programs and improves access.³

Therefore, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 323.

¹ University of Maryland. Maryland SNAP Households, 2021. [Research Paper].

<https://www.ssw.umaryland.edu/media/ssw/fwrtg/welfare-research/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/Maryland-SNAP-Households,-2021.pdf?&>

² Public Service Commission of Maryland. Electric Universal Service Program 2020 Annual Report.

<https://www.psc.state.md.us/wp-content/uploads/2020-EUSP-Annual-Report.pdf>

³ Opportunities to Streamline Enrollment Across Public Benefit Programs. *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*. 2 November 2017.

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/opportunities-to-streamline-enrollment-across-public-benefit>