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**SB 171 Landlord and Tenant - Office of Home Energy Programs - Financial Assistance
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Favorable
January 30, 2024**

Good afternoon, Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan Senior Director of Advocacy for AARP Maryland. We thank Senator Augustine for sponsoring this important bill. AARP Maryland is an organization representing the interests of Marylanders age 50 plus and their families. Key priorities of our organization include helping all Marylanders achieve financial and health security. AARP MD supports SB 171 Landlord and Tenant –Office of Home Energy Programs—Financial Assistance.

AARP is working hard to strengthen retirement security for all Americans by ensuring that workers and retirees have access to their hard earned and hard saved dollars. The rising cost of essential necessities, including groceries, utilities, and prescription drugs, is of significant concern for millions of Marylanders, especially for older and retired Marylanders living on fixed incomes. In fact, according to an AARP study, in 2017, 22% of Maryland residents stopped taking medication as prescribed due to rising costs.

Older Marylanders on fixed incomes clearly feel the effects of inflation more than the rest of us. These retirees bear a disproportionate brunt of drug and medical inflation, which is significantly higher than overall inflation. And when they can't pay their gas and electric, life becomes even more problematic.

SB 171 requires a landlord to accept financial assistance from the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) within the Department of Human Services (DHS) for the cost of utility services that a tenant is required to pay. A landlord must provide a tenant, on request, with utility service documentation necessary for OHEP to determine the tenant's eligibility for financial assistance, as specified.

AARP believes energy efficiency programs should specifically target customers who have low incomes, renters, and other hard-to-reach customers. States should consider assigning the responsibility of administering ratepayer-funded energy efficiency programs to an independent entity like the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) to make sure renters get the energy assistance they need.

For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB 171 have questions, please contact me tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.

