



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Gloria Brown Burnett, Interim Secretary

March 5, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: TESTIMONY ON SB 771 - HUMAN SERVICES - ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS - ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDING - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 771 (SB 771).

With offices in every Maryland jurisdiction, DHS provides preventive and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment and career opportunities to help Marylanders reach their full potential. Through the Family Investment Administration (FIA), DHS administers critical energy assistance through the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP), which are impacted by SB 771.

Crucially, SB 771 would amend the authorized uses of Maryland's Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) to include both electricity and fuel assistance. This policy change creates the opportunity for future SEIF-funded fuel assistance for OHEP customers. The current statutory language limits SEIF-funded energy assistance to electric-based programs.

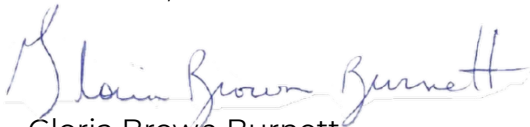
Additionally, SB 771 streamlines Maryland's energy assistance programs by transferring the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) authorizing statute from the Public Utilities Article to Human Services Article. The transition is structured to ensure continuity of energy assistance services to Maryland's low-income households. SB 771 declares OHEP as the sole administrator of EUSP. The Public Service Commission (PSC) would retain oversight responsibility of EUSP and would continue to report on EUSP to the Maryland General Assembly.

SB 771 would maintain the current purpose and policies of EUSP. Specifically, EUSP assists households with annual incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level through electric bill assistance and arrearage retirement, as well as with residential weatherization services. The bill would clarify the funding mechanisms and interagency collaborations necessary for EUSP's success, including the continued partnership with the Department of Housing and Community Development for the weatherization components.

Finally, SB 771 would preserve the rights, benefits, and retirement status of any PSC employee who DHS and PSC determines would need to move to OHEP due to the changes proposed. However, as OHEP already implements EUSP and the bill does not create new responsibilities for OHEP, DHS does not anticipate there will be a need to transfer any PSC employees.

For these reasons, DHS respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 771. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony for the Committee's consideration. If additional information is needed, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at justin.hayes1@maryland.gov.

In service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gloria Brown Burnett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

Gloria Brown Burnett
Interim Secretary