

SB0771_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

03/05/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#0771- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Human Services - Energy Assistance Programs - Administration and Funding

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0771, **Human Services - Energy Assistance Programs - Administration and Funding**

This bill will change where in Maryland government the administration of the electric universal service program is managed. The electric universal service program assists electric customers with annual incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. The newly empowered Office of Home Energy Programs in the Department of Human Services shall implement and administer the electric universal service program.

Among the duties the office will be assigned are:

- establish minimum and maximum benefits available to an electric customer under the bill assistance and arrearage retirement components
- coordinate benefits under the electric universal service program with benefits under the Maryland Energy Assistance Program and other available energy assistance program
- the office may, with input from a panel or roundtable of interested parties, contract to assist in administering the bill assistance and the arrearage retirement components of the electric universal service program.

Maryland Matters reported in July of 2025 *Energy bills likely to tick up again in 2026 after electricity auction clears at maximum price*¹

Consumers in a 13-state region that includes Maryland could see their electric bills rise another 1.5% to 5% starting in the summer of 2026

In response to this utility rate acceleration's effects this bill will transfer the administration of the electric universal service program from the Public Service Commission to the Office of Home Energy Programs in the Department of Human Services; and alter the authorized uses of the Strategic Energy Investment Fund to include fuel assistance programs.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0771.

¹ <https://marylandmatters.org/2025/07/23/energy-bills-likely-to-tick-up-again-in-2026-after-electricity-auction-clears-at-maximum-price/#:~:text=Energy%20bills%20likely%20to,consumers%2Dove%22%3EGov.>