



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

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

March 26, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 648 - OFFICE OF HOME ENERGY PROGRAMS - UNIFORM  
REDETERMINATION PROCESS - AGE - 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 House Bill (HB) 648, which was passed by the House unanimously.

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. Our Family Investment Administration (FIA) administers critical energy assistance for low-income households through the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP), which is affected by HB 648.

[Maryland Human Services Article § 5-5A-09](#), enacted in 2022, required that OHEP develop and update annually a uniform redetermination process to assist eligible customers who are at least 65 years old in enrolling in energy assistance programs. OHEP customers who do not qualify for the uniform redetermination process must either reapply for energy assistance every year or be approved through categorical eligibility. The redetermination process reduces administrative barriers older adults face when submitting energy assistance applications. Qualifying households are mailed a simplified, one-page form rather than the standard OHEP application. HB 648 would expand the availability of this redetermination process to households with members ages 60-64, allowing more older adults to access this streamlined process.

HB 648 is a fiscally responsible bill with no expected impact on energy assistance benefit expenditures. Approximately 1,760 households that currently receive OHEP assistance would be newly-eligible for the streamlined redetermination process in FY 2027 due to having household members between 60 and 64 years old. **To be clear, these households already receive OHEP assistance.** This bill would simply give these seniors access to the streamlined redetermination process rather than requiring them to complete the regular OHEP application each year.

Lowering the redetermination age to 60 would align the uniform redetermination process with federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) reporting requirements. LIHEAP's [authorizing statute](#) requires the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) collect data on "the number of households which received such assistance [LIHEAP] and include one or more individuals who are 60 years or older or disabled or include young children." Per [LIHEAP reporting guidance from HHS](#), these groups are considered "vulnerable populations." DHS believes that aligning our redetermination process with the federal definition of "vulnerable populations" is in the best interest of Marylanders.

Finally, HB 648 reduces the administrative burden and documentation hurdles that frequently lead to a lapse in energy assistance. Extending the simplified redetermination path ensures that eligible households with members aged 60-64 are processed and protected before peak seasonal demand, preventing dangerous utility shut-offs and stabilizing energy costs for older adults. This proactive shift will help protect the health and safety of Maryland's aging population.

For these reasons, DHS respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 648. 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](mailto: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