

Senate Bill 771 – Human Services – Energy Assistance Programs – Administration and Funding

Position: Support with Amendment

Submitted by: Efficient Home, LLC

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Date: March 5, 2026

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Efficient Home, LLC respectfully submits this written testimony in support of Senate Bill 771, with a recommended amendment to strengthen coordination between Maryland’s energy assistance programs and energy efficiency programs serving low-income households.

Efficient Home, LLC is a Maryland-based energy efficiency contractor headquartered in Burtonsville. For more than a decade, our company has delivered residential, multifamily, and commercial energy audits, weatherization services, and building performance upgrades throughout Maryland. We have participated in utility-sponsored EmPOWER Maryland programs and have extensive experience serving income-qualified households facing high energy burdens.

Senate Bill 771 takes an important step by transferring administration of the electric universal service program to the Office of Home Energy Programs within the Department of Human Services. Aligning energy assistance with other human services programs has the potential to improve delivery, accessibility, and coordination of benefits.

However, while bill assistance addresses immediate arrearages, it does not reduce the underlying drivers of high energy costs. Energy efficiency and weatherization improvements — including insulation, air sealing, HVAC upgrades, and related services — provide long-term, structural reductions in monthly energy bills. Connecting eligible households to these programs reduces repeat arrearages and strengthens the effectiveness of public assistance dollars.

In our experience, many households who qualify for energy bill assistance are also eligible for EmPOWER Maryland income-qualified energy efficiency programs, but without a formal referral mechanism, participation rates remain lower than they should be. A simple coordination requirement would meaningfully improve program outcomes.

Accordingly, we respectfully recommend the following amendment.

Proposed Amendment Language

Insert in the section of the bill transferring administration of the electric universal service program to the Office of Home Energy Programs:

(X) The Office of Home Energy Programs shall coordinate with the Maryland Energy Administration, electric and gas utilities, and approved energy efficiency program implementers to establish a referral process to ensure that each household receiving assistance under the electric universal service program:

(1) Is informed of the availability of income-qualified energy efficiency and weatherization services funded under EmPOWER Maryland and related state or utility programs; and

(2) Is provided, where appropriate, with a direct referral or facilitated enrollment into such programs.

(Y) The Office may enter into data-sharing agreements, consistent with applicable privacy laws, as necessary to implement this subsection.

This amendment would:

- Reduce long-term energy burdens for low-income Maryland households
- Improve cost-effectiveness of universal service funds
- Lower repeat arrearages
- Strengthen coordination across state-administered and utility-administered programs
- Advance Maryland's energy efficiency and equity goals

By pairing short-term financial assistance with long-term energy savings strategies, Maryland can move toward a more sustainable and integrated approach to energy affordability.

For these reasons, Efficient Home, LLC respectfully supports Senate Bill 771 and urges favorable consideration with the proposed amendment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Please feel free to contact me for any additional information regarding the requested amendment:

Tom Coale
tom@perryjacobson.com
443-630-0507