



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 801 - REGIONAL GREENHOUSE GAS INITIATIVE, EMPOWER ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS, AND NET ENERGY METERING - POSITION: UNFAVORABLE

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 an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 801 (SB 801).

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS provides preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to assist Marylanders in reaching their full potential. Our Family Investment Administration (FIA) implements energy assistance programs which are affected by SB 801. This bill would require the Governor to withdraw from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) by January 1, 2027, and only permit rejoining RGGI if (1) all other states served by PJM Interconnection become full members of RGGI or (2) Maryland is a net exporter of electricity.

Withdrawing from RGGI would dismantle the special funding for Maryland's Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) that supports FIA's electric assistance programs administered by the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP). Without replacement funding, such as the use of general funds, DHS would be forced to abandon or significantly curtail electric utility assistance. It would leave households in every county in Maryland vulnerable to electric shutoffs, summer heat emergencies, and persistent utility debt.

25 S. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-3500
Tel: 1-800-332-6347 | TTY: 1-800-735-2258 | www.dhs.maryland.gov

RGGI auction proceeds go into SEIF, which is the primary funding source for both the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP), providing ongoing electric bill payment assistance to income-eligible households, and the Electric Arrearage Retirement Assistance (EARA) Program, which retires past-due electric balances to prevent service termination and restore utility service. In State Fiscal Year 2025, DHS issued approximately \$69 million in RGGI auction proceeds on electric bill assistance and arrearage relief. For more information about EUSP and EARA, please see our [briefing](#) from earlier in the legislative session.

Energy bill assistance is a core household-stabilization strategy. Reliable electric service is essential for heating and cooling, food storage, lighting, access to communication, and operating medical and assistive equipment. For low-income households, seniors, people with disabilities, and families with young children, energy assistance prevents shutoffs that pose serious health and safety risks, particularly during periods of extreme heat or cold. By reducing monthly bills and retiring arrearages, these programs help stabilize household finances, prevent the accumulation of unmanageable utility debt, support housing stability, and enable households to direct limited income toward other basic needs such as rent, food, childcare, and transportation. Stable utility service also enables employment, education, and participation in workforce training by ensuring households remain connected to the internet and other essential digital communication tools.

For these reasons, DHS respectfully urges the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB 801. 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