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**SB 771 – Human Services - Energy Assistance Programs - Administration and Funding  
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
March 5, 2026  
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee. My name is Sara Westrick, and I am the Advocacy Director for AARP Maryland and a resident of Anne Arundel County. We thank President Ferguson for introducing this legislation.

AARP Maryland represents more than 850,000 members across the state, making it one of the largest membership-based organizations advocating for older Marylanders. We are a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering people to live their best lives as they age. Our work focuses on issues that matter most to older adults and their families, including affordable utilities and financial security.

For Maryland's seniors, stable and affordable access to energy is a matter of health, safety, and dignity. Many older adults live on fixed incomes that simply do not keep pace with rising utility costs. When forced to choose between paying for prescriptions, food, or heating their homes, many seniors make unthinkable sacrifices. Programs like the Electric Universal Service Program and fuel assistance are lifelines that prevent these impossible choices.

SB 771 strengthens these critical supports by consolidating energy assistance administration under the Office of Home Energy Programs, allowing for more efficient service delivery and a more streamlined experience for seniors seeking help. The bill also expands the flexibility of existing funds, ensuring that both electric and fuel assistance programs can better meet the unique needs of older adults.

By modernizing administration of the program while preserving oversight, this bill helps ensure that seniors can safely remain in their homes and avoid utility shut-offs.

On behalf of Maryland's older residents, we respectfully urge a favorable report.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Westrick, AARP Maryland Advocacy Director at [swestrick@aarp.org](mailto:swestrick@aarp.org) or by calling 410-310-0374.

