

MDOA - FAV - HB 648- OHEP Redetermination - Age -

Uploaded by: Andrea Nunez

Position: FAV



Wes Moore | Governor

Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor

Carmel Roques | Secretary

Date: March 24, 2026

Bill Number: **HB 648**

Bill Title: Office of Home Energy Programs - Uniform Redetermination Process - Age

Committee: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

MDOA Position: FAVORABLE

The Department of Aging (MDOA) thanks the Chair and Committee members for the opportunity to submit this favorable testimony for House Bill (HB) 648 - Office of Home Energy Programs - Uniform Redetermination Process - Age.

The Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) serves as Maryland's State Unit on Aging, administering federal and state funding for core programs, overseeing the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) network at the local level that provides supportive services to older adults, and planning for Maryland's growing older adult population. MDOA and AAAs deliver the Maryland Access Point service, a wide-ranging single point of entry for services and options counseling for older adults, caregivers and other community members. Requests for assistance with energy and other utility costs for older adults and caregivers on limited incomes are frequently received by MAP as well as the broader aging services network in Maryland. MDOA commends the Department of Human Services for bringing this important legislation to reduce redetermination barriers for older adults utilizing these services. Passing this bill will make approximately 1,760 Maryland households with a member age 60-64 that currently receive OHEP eligible for the streamlined redetermination process. In this fiscally-constrained climate with rising energy costs for all; this is exactly the type of smart adjustment we should be making to state processes to ensure more older people continue to receive useful benefits without interruption.



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This bill directly aligns with MDOA's Longevity-Ready Maryland Plan¹, which will work to make Maryland more prepared for our increasingly longer lives over the next 10 years.

For these reasons, the Department of Aging respectfully urges a **favorable** report for HB 648. If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Nunez, Legislative Director, at andrea.nunez@maryland.gov or (443) 414-8183.

¹ MD Department of Aging website, "Longevity Ready Maryland," *available at*: <https://lrm.maryland.gov/>

HB0648 - OPC Testimony in Senate.pdf

Uploaded by: David Lapp

Position: FAV

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BILL NO.: House Bill 0648 – Office of Home Energy Programs -
Uniform Redetermination Process - Age

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation
Education, Energy, and the Environment

HEARING DATE: February 17, 2026 (ENT)
March 26, 2026 (EEE)

SPONSOR: Chair, ENT by Request of the Dep't of Human Services

POSITION: Favorable

The Office of People's Counsel (OPC) respectfully offers the following comments in support of House Bill 0648, Office of Home Energy Programs - Uniform Redetermination Process – Age, which proposes to lower the age at which energy assistance customers are eligible to annually re-enroll in energy assistance using the “redetermination process.”

Under current law, the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) determines annually whether energy assistance customers aged 65 and older remain qualified to receive energy assistance through a simplified process known as redetermination. Rather than requiring eligible customers to fill out an application and submit paperwork to apply for energy assistance each year, the redetermination process allows energy assistance customers 65 and older to simply reconfirm their income each year, reducing both stress for the applicant and the administrative burden on OHEP. HB 0648 extends the benefits of this simplified enrollment process to OHEP customers aged 60–64, who—like those 65 and older—often rely on a fixed income that is unlikely to change—a statutory change that stands to benefit both eligible customers and the State.

Recommendation: OPC requests a favorable Committee report on HB 0648.

HB0648_DHS_FAV (EEE).pdf

Uploaded by: Gloria Brown-Burnett

Position: FAV



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.

In service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gloria Brown Burnett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Gloria Brown Burnett
Interim Secretary

HB648_FAV_EconAction_cross.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV



HB648: Office of Home Energy Programs - Uniform Redetermination Process – Age

Position: Favorable

March 26, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
Cc: Members of the Committee

Chair Feldman and members of the committee,

Economic Action Maryland Fund urges a favorable report on HB648, which would lower the age to redetermine eligibility for energy assistance from 65 to 60.

As the members of this committee are painfully aware, energy rates have risen dramatically in recent years due to a variety of factors. Thousands of Marylanders each year face shutoff notices due to nonpayment, while many others are forced to juggle multi-hundred-dollar utility bills alongside the ever-increasing costs of rent, groceries, and other necessities. In fact, when Economic Action Maryland Fund surveyed our members and other stakeholders this winter, 63% stated utility bills were their primary concern.

Maryland's energy assistance programs help those most in need and have strict income thresholds to determine the support that someone is eligible for. Lowering the age for the redetermination process would enable a significant number of households to potentially qualify for assistance, easing their energy burden in a meaningful and timely manner.

HB468 is a fast, efficient way to provide assistance to Marylanders and we urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bevan-Dangel
Deputy Director

Economic Action (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) champions economic rights and housing justice through advocacy, research, consumer education, and direct service. Our 12,500 supporters include consumer advocates, practitioners, and low-income and working families throughout Maryland.

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NASW Maryland - 2026 HB 648 FAV - Office of Home E

Uploaded by: Karessa Proctor

Position: FAV



**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 26, 2026**

HB 648 - Office of Home Energy Programs - Uniform Redetermination Process - Age

****Support****

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) Committee on Aging, we would like to express our support for HB 648 - Office of Home Energy Programs – Uniform Redetermination Process – Age.

As social workers who serve older adults, we understand the enormous impact of rising home energy prices on our clients. Many of them rely heavily on Maryland’s Energy Assistance programs, but some have struggled to apply and complete redetermination documents.

In 2022, the burden on older program participants was reduced by the enactment of SB 719 Human Services – Office of Home Energy Programs – Power to the People Pilot Program Personnel and Uniform Redetermination Process. That law simplified the redetermination process for energy assistance for people 65 years and older and those with permanent disabilities. The law allowed those seniors to complete the entire application for energy assistance only once, or, at most, every three years, instead of annually. Periodically, they receive postcards asking them to verify that there was no change in their income or household size. The law also allows them 45 days to respond to requests for additional documentation instead of the 15 day timeframe in place for younger applicants.

HB 648 would change the age range for this simplified redetermination process from 65 to 60. This would be a tremendous help to lower-income people in this age range, who often face the same barriers as older seniors – difficulty completing forms, and challenges with submitting documentation.

Now more than ever, we need to do everything possible to help older adults with their energy bills. For that reason, we urge a positive report on HB 648.

Respectfully,

Karessa Proctor, BSW, MSW
Executive Director, NASW-MD

HB648 - MoCo DEP - (GA 26) FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Leslie Frey

Position: FAV



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 648

DATE: March 26, 2026

SPONSOR: Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

ASSIGNED TO: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT PERSON: Bryan Howard (bryan.howard@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: Support (Department of Environmental Protection)

Office of Home Energy Programs - Uniform Redetermination Process - Age

House Bill 648 lowers the eligibility age for simplified reenrollment for senior households with fixed incomes from 65 to 60. The bill will make it easier for many seniors in Maryland to renew their enrollments with the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) and to participate in energy assistance programs.

OHEP provides critical utility bill assistance for income-qualified individuals. Interest in these programs is rising as utility bills continue to climb; the Maryland Department of Human Services reports a 16% increase in Electric Universal Service Program bill payment from FY2025 to FY2026. As growth strains staff resources, it is important to find efficiencies in program delivery and make things easier for beneficiaries. House Bill 648 achieves both outcomes through a simple but important process improvement that will reduce cumbersome and time-consuming steps for older households to continue receiving support through OHEP. The bill will make it easier for many Marylanders to benefit from OHEP programs that can lower their energy bills.

The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection respectfully requests that the Education, Energy and the Environment committee issue a favorable report on House Bill 648.