

Environment and Transportation Committee

2/17/26 HB 648 Hearing

Office of Home Energy Programs - Uniform Redetermination Process - Age

FAVORABLE

Hello Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair Guyton and members of the Committee.

The Maryland Energy Advocates Coalition works to ensure that low-income families can afford their utility bills through our advocacy, reporting, and consumer education.

HB648 reduces the automatic energy assistance redetermination age from 65 to 60, which matches Maryland's official definition of a "senior."

Our coalition, and our partners that signed on to this testimony, strongly support HB648 which will expand the successful energy assistance redetermination process.

In 2022, energy advocates worked to pass SB719 to codify Maryland Office of Home Energy Program's (aka OHEP) energy assistance redetermination for seniors who receive fixed incomes. SB719 required all OHEP local agencies to participate in "redetermination." Instead of seniors re-applying for energy assistance in-person every year, under SB719 OHEP sends a personalized redetermination to last year's Clients aged 65 and older. Residents confirm there's been no status change, sign and mail the "redet" letter back in a pre-stamped envelope. Their local OHEP agency certifies that fiscal year's grants. The benefits are fewer elderly folks' visits into local offices, less stress on seniors, and more efficient DSS processing.

Per OHEP reporting, in fiscal year 2025, 19,156 "REDET" letters were mailed. And 17,709 were mailed back for grants. A 92% participation rate.

HB 648 expands this more effective redetermination process to include ages 60-64 on fixed incomes.

Thank you for sponsoring this bill and we ask for your Committee to favorably report on this bill.