

HOUSE BILL 998

C5

2lr1961
CF SB 905

By: **Delegate Carey**

Introduced and read first time: February 10, 2022

Assigned to: Economic Matters

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Human Services – Silver Energy Savers Program and Energy Assistance Fund**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the Office of Home Energy Programs to establish a Silver
4 Energy Savers Program to provide bill assistance to eligible energy customers who
5 are at least a certain age; requiring the Office to approve a third-party supplier to
6 provide assistance with the Program; requiring the Office to designate four centers
7 in certain regions of the State to administer the Program; requiring the Office to
8 perform certain duties to carry out the Program, including establishing a certain
9 communication system, requiring certain local offices to perform certain functions,
10 and authorizing the third-party supplier to allow telephonic signatures for a certain
11 purpose; establishing the Office of Home Energy Programs Energy Assistance Fund
12 as a special, nonlapsing fund; and generally relating to the Office of Home Energy
13 Programs and bill assistance for eligible energy customers.

14 BY renumbering

15 Article – Human Services

16 Section 5-5A-09

17 to be Section 5-5A-10

18 Annotated Code of Maryland

19 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

20 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

21 Article – Human Services

22 Section 5-5A-01(d)

23 Annotated Code of Maryland

24 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

25 BY adding to

26 Article – Human Services

27 Section 5-5A-09

28 Annotated Code of Maryland

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



(2019 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That Section(s) 5-5A-09 of Article – Human Services of the Annotated Code of Maryland be renumbered to be Section(s) 5-5A-10.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Human Services

5-5A-01.

(d) “Office” means the Office of Home Energy Programs.

5-5A-09.

(A) THE OFFICE SHALL ESTABLISH A SILVER ENERGY SAVERS PROGRAM TO PROVIDE BILL ASSISTANCE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS SECTION TO ELIGIBLE ENERGY CUSTOMERS WHO ARE AT LEAST 60 YEARS OLD.

(B) THE OFFICE SHALL APPROVE A THIRD-PARTY SUPPLIER TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE SILVER ENERGY SAVERS PROGRAM BY:

(1) HELPING ELIGIBLE ENERGY CUSTOMERS UNDERSTAND ANY FORMS;

(2) HELPING ELIGIBLE ENERGY CUSTOMERS WITH ANY REQUIRED APPLICATION INFORMATION; AND

(3) TRANSPORTING APPLICATIONS FROM AN ELIGIBLE ENERGY CUSTOMER TO A LOCAL OFFICE THROUGH THE PROCESS ESTABLISHED BY THE THIRD-PARTY SUPPLIER.

(C) THE OFFICE SHALL DESIGNATE FOUR CENTERS TO ADMINISTER THE SILVER ENERGY SAVERS PROGRAM, INCLUDING:

(1) ONE LOCATION IN CENTRAL MARYLAND;

(2) ONE LOCATION ON THE EASTERN SHORE OF MARYLAND;

(3) ONE LOCATION IN SOUTHERN MARYLAND; AND

(4) ONE LOCATION IN WESTERN MARYLAND.

1 **(D) CENTERS DESIGNATED BY THE OFFICE UNDER SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS**
2 **SECTION SHALL:**

3 **(1) ESTABLISH CALL CENTERS TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO ELIGIBLE**
4 **ENERGY CUSTOMERS;**

5 **(2) ASSIST ELIGIBLE ENERGY CUSTOMERS IN GATHERING THE**
6 **INFORMATION REQUIRED TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO A LOCAL OFFICE;**

7 **(3) COLLECT DATA FOR EACH ELIGIBLE ENERGY CUSTOMER THAT IS**
8 **PROVIDED ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING THE CUSTOMER'S:**

9 **(I) NAME;**

10 **(II) ADDRESS;**

11 **(III) AGE;**

12 **(IV) TELEPHONE NUMBER; AND**

13 **(V) UTILITY COMPANY; AND**

14 **(4) MAINTAIN WRITTEN RECORDS OF THEIR ACTIONS.**

15 **(E) THE OFFICE SHALL:**

16 **(1) ESTABLISH A COMMUNICATION SYSTEM BETWEEN LOCAL OFFICES**
17 **AND THE THIRD-PARTY SUPPLIER APPROVED UNDER SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS**
18 **SECTION TO ENABLE COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE APPLICATIONS OF ELIGIBLE**
19 **ENERGY CUSTOMERS, THE GRANTS PROCESS, AND THE REASONS FOR DENIAL OF AN**
20 **APPLICATION;**

21 **(2) REQUIRE LOCAL OFFICES TO:**

22 **(I) PERFORM HOME VISITS TO OBTAIN DOCUMENTS FROM**
23 **ELIGIBLE ENERGY CUSTOMERS WHEN NECESSARY; AND**

24 **(II) ESTABLISH A SYSTEM TO COORDINATE THE TRANSFER OF**
25 **DOCUMENTS TO THE THIRD-PARTY SUPPLIER; AND**

1 **(3) AUTHORIZE THE THIRD-PARTY SUPPLIER TO ALLOW TELEPHONIC**
2 **SIGNATURES FOR ELIGIBLE ENERGY CUSTOMERS IN THE SILVER ENERGY SAVERS**
3 **PROGRAM.**

4 **(F) (1) IN THIS SUBSECTION, "FUND" MEANS THE OFFICE OF HOME**
5 **ENERGY PROGRAMS ENERGY ASSISTANCE FUND.**

6 **(2) THERE IS AN OFFICE OF HOME ENERGY PROGRAMS ENERGY**
7 **ASSISTANCE FUND.**

8 **(3) THE PURPOSE OF THE FUND IS TO ADMINISTER THE SILVER**
9 **ENERGY SAVERS PROGRAM.**

10 **(4) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADMINISTER THE FUND.**

11 **(5) THE FUND IS A SPECIAL, NONLAPSING FUND THAT IS NOT**
12 **SUBJECT TO § 7-302 OF THE STATE FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT ARTICLE.**

13 **(6) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL HOLD THE FUND SEPARATELY,**
14 **AND THE COMPTROLLER SHALL ACCOUNT FOR THE FUND.**

15 **(7) THE FUND CONSISTS OF:**

16 **(I) MONEY APPROPRIATED IN THE STATE BUDGET TO THE**
17 **FUND; AND**

18 **(II) ANY OTHER MONEY FROM ANY OTHER SOURCE ACCEPTED**
19 **FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE FUND.**

20 **(8) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024, THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE**
21 **ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF \$200,000 TO THE FUND.**

22 **(9) THE FUND MAY BE USED ONLY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF**
23 **THE SILVER ENERGY SAVERS PROGRAM, INCLUDING STAFFING.**

24 **(10) (I) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL INVEST THE MONEY OF THE**
25 **FUND IN THE SAME MANNER AS OTHER STATE MONEY MAY BE INVESTED.**

26 **(II) ANY INTEREST EARNINGS OF THE FUND SHALL BE**
27 **CREDITED TO THE GENERAL FUND OF THE STATE.**

28 **(11) EXPENDITURES FROM THE FUND MAY BE MADE ONLY IN**
29 **ACCORDANCE WITH THE STATE BUDGET.**

1 **(12) MONEY EXPENDED FROM THE FUND FOR THE SILVER ENERGY**
2 **SAVERS PROGRAM IS SUPPLEMENTAL TO AND IS NOT INTENDED TO TAKE THE**
3 **PLACE OF FUNDING THAT OTHERWISE WOULD BE APPROPRIATED FOR BILL**
4 **ASSISTANCE TO ELIGIBLE ENERGY CUSTOMERS.**

5 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
6 1, 2022.