

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2022 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 998
 Economic Matters

(Delegate Carey)

Finance

Human Services – Silver Energy Savers Program and Energy Assistance Fund

This bill establishes a Silver Energy Savers Program in the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) in the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide bill assistance to eligible energy customers who are at least 60 years old. OHEP must enter into a contract with 2-1-1 Maryland to provide assistance through the program. 2-1-1 Maryland must designate four regional centers to administer the program. The bill also establishes the OHEP Energy Assistance Fund, administered by DHS, to be used for administrative costs of 2-1-1 Maryland and the program, including staffing. Beginning in fiscal 2024, the Governor must include an appropriation of \$200,000 in the annual budget bill to the fund. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2022.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: No effect in FY 2023. General fund expenditures increase by at least \$200,000 annually beginning in FY 2024 to reflect the mandated appropriation; special fund revenues and expenditures increase accordingly. **This bill establishes a mandated appropriation beginning in FY 2024.**

(in dollars)	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
SF Revenue	\$0	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
GF Expenditure	\$0	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
SF Expenditure	\$0	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Net Effect	\$0	(\$200,000)	(\$200,000)	(\$200,000)	(\$200,000)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Silver Energy Savers Program

2-1-1 Maryland must designate four centers to administer the program, including one location in Central Maryland, the Eastern Shore, Southern Maryland, and Western Maryland. The centers must (1) establish call centers to assist eligible energy customers; (2) assist eligible energy customers in gathering the information required to submit an application to a local office; (3) collect data for each eligible energy customer that is provided assistance, including the customer's name, address, age, telephone number, and utility company; and (4) maintain written records of their actions.

2-1-1 Maryland must (1) help eligible energy customers understand any forms; (2) help eligible energy customers with any required application information; and (3) transport applications from an eligible energy customer to a local office through the process established by the third-party supplier.

OHEP must establish a communication system between local offices and 2-1-1 Maryland to enable communication about the applications of eligible energy customers, the grants process, and the reasons for denial of an application. OHEP must require local offices to perform home visits to obtain documents from eligible energy customers when necessary and establish a system to coordinate the transfer of documents to 2-1-1 Maryland. OHEP must authorize 2-1-1 Maryland to allow telephonic signatures for eligible energy customers in the program.

Office of Home Energy Programs Energy Assistance Fund

The fund is a special, nonlapsing fund that consists of money appropriated in the State budget to the fund and any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit of the fund. Expenditures may be made only in accordance with the State budget. Money expended from the fund for the program is supplemental to and is not intended to take the place of funding that otherwise would be appropriated for bill assistance to customers.

Current Law: OHEP administers a variety of energy assistance programs and services for residential customers using local administering agencies, including local departments of social services, in each county and Baltimore City. These programs include, among others, electric universal services program, and the Maryland Energy Assistance Program, which is Maryland's version of the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

2-1-1 Maryland

The three-digit number 2-1-1 is the primary information and referral telephone number for health and human services in the State. 2-1-1 Maryland is a private, nonprofit organization that maintains an information and referral service network that is available to Maryland residents via telephone and Internet. 2-1-1 Maryland offers 24/7 guidance in accessing health, crisis, and social services. The Health and Human Services Referral Board within the Maryland Department of Health provides oversight and guidance to the 2-1-1 Maryland system.

State Fiscal Effect: The bill establishes a mandated appropriation of \$200,000 for the OHEP Energy Assistance Fund beginning in fiscal 2024. The special fund may be used for administrative costs of 2-1-1 Maryland and the Silver Energy Savers Program, including staffing. Therefore, general fund expenditures increase by \$200,000 annually beginning in fiscal 2024 to reflect the mandated appropriation; special fund revenues and expenditures increase accordingly. This estimate does not reflect any costs associated with home visits by local administering agencies.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: SB 905 (Senator Benson) - Finance.

Information Source(s): Montgomery County; Department of Budget and Management; Department of Human Services; Department of Legislative Services

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