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Anne Arundel County

Economic Matters Committee

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Alcoholic Beverages

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Joint Committee on

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB 938 - Home Energy Assistance - Critical Medical Needs Program - Power to the People Pilot Program –
as amended**

SPONSOR TESTIMONY

Cross-file: SB 1024

House Economic Matters Committee, February 27, 2020

Chairman Davis, Vice Chair Dumais and Members of the Committee,

House Bill 938 is a bill that will establish a pilot program to help further the reach of a current program put in place in 2019.

I am grateful to the Committee for their positive support last year for HB 1189 **Home Energy Assistance - Critical Medical Needs Program** that was passed and enacted. It formalized a program that had been a successful pilot designed to ensure individuals with critical medical needs would get the necessary assistance and access to available funds to keep their electricity on – in many cases it has been lifesaving.

The program, run by OHEP, is working well, and we currently have approximately 250 navigators that provide this service to those Maryland citizens in need. However, there are many individuals in areas that have no trained navigators. While financial assistance is available to any Marylander that fits the qualifications, access is a huge stumbling block. It is heartbreaking to hear of individuals in dire need not getting assistance that is available simply because we can't get to them

We are proposing a three-year pilot program to address this gap. Cindy Carter of the Cancer Support Foundation, the Fuel Fund of Maryland and the 211 MD United Way, have designed "Power to People" – a program that will provide a core staff of paid navigators through 211 MD, who are in an excellent position to help eligible individuals obtain energy assistance by phone and through in-home visits.

The pilot program outline is attached. Please review it, and I encourage you to read the written testimonies by the experts behind this program; the case is compelling and the outcome worthwhile.

I respectfully ask for a favorable report on HB 938 as amended.