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Economic Matters

HB945 - SUPPORT

Eileen O'Connor-Liebman, Patient Advocate
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RE: Testimony in Support of HB945

Dear Chairman Davis and esteemed members of the House Economic Matters Committee:

I am Eileen O'Connor-Liebman, Patient Advocate for Maryland Oncology Hematology in Columbia Maryland here today in favor of HB945.

The Critical Medical Needs Program (CMNP) started as a Pilot Program in our office in Spring of 2015. We were beyond excited and honored to be a part of the process when it was passed into law in Spring of 2019. Throughout that time until present, the program has helped the most vulnerable residents across the state apply for the energy assistance grants that are available every year for those who qualify and those that are able to access the program.

Access to the program for patients who are 60 years old and above is why I am here today. During the past several years the majority of the patients that we have assisted with their CMNP applications have been in the 60 years old and above demographic. The CMNP has been a successful statewide partnership between state agencies, non-profits and all most utility companies. This program has reduced the barriers that so many with medical issues face when trying to apply for help. With everything else they have going on these days; the patients are so grateful to have a helping hand navigate them through this process. This addition to the CMNP would help with reducing yet another barrier to those 60 years and older.



To participate in the CMNP, a patient needs to have medical issues and work with a trained navigator. A Physician's Certification must be signed by a medical provider of the patient as well. The Physician's Certification indicates that the patient's power needs to be kept on due to a medical challenge. This process can be challenging and overwhelming because the patients are at the mercy of the office staff to process this document properly and in a timely manner. This is even more evident as many doctors' offices have reduced hours, staggered staff or many are working from home since the pandemic.

Allowing the 60 years old and higher demographic to work with Navigators and not have to provide a Physician's Certification would make this program work more efficiently. In addition, it would not compromise the integrity of the CMNP since they would be working with one of the 300 plus trained Navigators.

HB945 is a necessary and vital addition to the CMNP that helps our most vulnerable, our seniors. We are in support and are asking for a favorable report on HB945.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Eileen O'Connor-Liebman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eileen O'Connor-Liebman, Patient Advocate