



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 283

Department of Human Services - Electric Universal Service Program – Eligibility

Senate Finance Committee
February 1, 2022

Submitted by Julia Gross and Kali Schumitz, Co-Chairs

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) strongly supports SB 283, which requires the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) to establish a process that allows all income qualified Marylanders to access the state funded Electric Universal Service Program in order to expand access to critical utility assistance to low-income Marylanders.

Currently, the Office of Home Energy Programs within DHS requires Marylanders to use one consolidated application process to apply for both major utility assistance programs offered by the state. While this process greatly aids in convenience and streamlining for households that qualify for both programs, it unintentionally bars eligible households who qualify for the state funded Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) but not the federally funded Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP). This is because MEAP requires that Maryland use federally established eligibility requirements, which are stricter and more limiting than the state's EUSP.

With the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more Marylanders are forced to rely on public safety net programs to meet their basic needs. While EUSP was established to be widely available to households that meet the income guidelines in statute, the current consolidated application process means that eligible families are losing out on critically needed electricity bill credits that they are rightfully eligible to receive.

SB 283 aims to fix this issue by establishing a more equitable process to ensure low-income Marylanders who are eligible for EUSP, but not eligible for MEAP, still receive the assistance they need, as intended.

MAP appreciates your consideration and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 283.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.