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Finance

SB719 – SUPPORT

February 28th, 2022

Eileen O'Connor-Liebman, Patient Advocate
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To: **Senator Benson and esteemed members of the Senate Finance Committee**

RE: **Testimony in Support of SB 719 Office of Home Energy Programs – Uniform Redetermination Process**

Dear Senator Benson and esteemed members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am Eileen O'Connor-Liebman, Patient Advocate for Maryland Oncology Hematology in Columbia Maryland writing today in favor of SB719.

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. This program is a successful partnership between state agencies, utility companies, trained navigators and non-profits.

The Uniform Redetermination Process SB719 would allow seniors who are OHEP eligible to submit an application for Home Energy Assistance with all documentation one time. Thereafter, they would be verified via mailing or other means. This would be a significant benefit for seniors as many of them really struggle with the application & gathering of documents. It is also extremely difficult for them to get to a local OHEP office. The last several applications that I have helped process through the Critical Medical Needs Program have been patients over 65 years of age. You can hear the frustration, embarrassment and overwhelmingness in their voice when helping them navigate the system. Many of our seniors are often being cared for by various family members at different times and that scenario makes it incredibly difficult to maneuver. **The Uniform Redetermination Process** will help the most vulnerable residents across the state apply for the energy assistance grants that are available for those who qualify and ease the burden of re-applying each year.

SB719 is a necessary and vital component that will help our most vulnerable, our seniors. We are in support and are asking for a favorable report on SB719.

Sincerely,

Eileen O'Connor-Liebman, Patient Advocate