

**STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF PEOPLE'S COUNSEL**

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BILL NO.: House Bill 969
Home Energy Assistance
Critical Medical Needs Program
Power to the People Pilot Program

COMMITTEE: Economic Matters

HEARING DATE: February 11, 2021

SPONSOR: Delegate Carey

POSITION: Support

The Office of People's Counsel supports House Bill 969. The Office of Home Energy Program's (OHEP) Critical Medical Needs (CMN) Program expedites the energy assistance applications of those who are certified as medically vulnerable. HB 969 creates a pilot program to train 2-1-1- United Way Helpline intake workers to identify and assist as navigators those individuals that qualify for the CMN Program.

Navigators are an integral part of the process for obtaining energy assistance through the CMN Program. Eligible individuals must work with a navigator to submit their Program application. The navigation role is voluntary for service agencies. House Bill 969 will make additional navigators available for assistance through the training of intake specialists on how to assist critically medically vulnerable individuals with the collecting of application information, completing and submitting applications, and making referrals. Adding navigators to the 2-1-1- helpline system will connect more people who need and qualify for assistance to the Critical Medical Needs Program.

Recommendation. OPC supports House Bill 969.