

DAVID S. LAPP
PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

WILLIAM F. FIELDS
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

JULIANA BELL
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

— OPC —
OFFICE OF PEOPLE'S COUNSEL
State of Maryland

6 ST. PAUL STREET, SUITE 2102
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21202
WWW.OPC.MARYLAND.GOV

BRANDI NIELAND
DIRECTOR, CONSUMER
ASSISTANCE UNIT

CARISSA RALBOVSKY
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

BILL NO.: House Bill 0648 – Office of Home Energy Programs -
Uniform Redetermination Process - Age

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

HEARING DATE: February 17, 2026 (ENT)

SPONSOR: Chair, ENT by Request of the Department of Human Services

POSITION: Favorable

The Office of People’s Counsel (OPC) respectfully offers the following comments in support of House Bill 0648, Office of Home Energy Programs - Uniform Redetermination Process – Age, which proposes to lower the age at which energy assistance customers are eligible to annually re-enroll in energy assistance using the “redetermination process.”

Under current law, the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) determines annually whether energy assistance customers aged 65 and older remain qualified to receive energy assistance through a simplified process known as redetermination. Rather than requiring eligible customers to fill out an application and submit paperwork to apply for energy assistance each year, the redetermination process allows energy assistance customers 65 and older to simply reconfirm their income each year, reducing both stress for the applicant and the administrative burden on OHEP. HB 0648 extends the benefits of this simplified enrollment process to OHEP customers aged 60–64, who—like those 65 and older—often rely on a fixed income that is unlikely to change—a statutory change that stands to benefit both eligible customers and the State.

Recommendation: OPC requests a favorable Committee report on HB 0648.