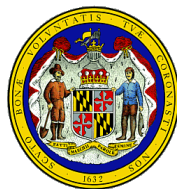


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### PRESS RELEASE

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### OFFICE OF PEOPLE'S COUNSEL LAUNCHES NEW TOOLKIT TO HELP CONSUMERS PAY ENERGY BILLS DURING PANDEMIC

JANUARY 20, 2021

The Office of People's Counsel (OPC) announced its launch of a new energy assistance toolkit to help Maryland households keep their power on during the pandemic.

“People are falling behind on their energy bills. We want people to know help is out there,” said David S. Lapp, Acting People’s Counsel. “The CARES Act infused \$150 million into Maryland’s energy assistance programs, but unfortunately only about a quarter of eligible households apply. This toolkit gives people guidance to get needed assistance during these unprecedented times.”

Maryland energy assistance programs, administered through the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP), provide households direct financial assistance for their utility bills. Because of the pandemic, most local OHEP offices are closed for walk-in assistance, making it more challenging for people to get the help they need. OPC is launching the toolkit to simplify the process and establish a one-stop-shop for all the information a person needs to apply. These resources are more important than ever during the winter and the pandemic, when many children are learning from home.

The toolkit includes applications, forms, and written guidance, as well as instructional videos. The videos provide step-by-step instructions for people to determine if they are eligible, the documents needed to apply, and where to find and submit applications. The videos were made possible through funds provided by the Abell Foundation for production by Wide Angle Youth Media.

The toolkit can be found by clicking the link below or in the attached pdf document.

## **[Energy Assistance Toolkit](#)**

Please view [OPC's COVID-19 Information and Assistance Resource Sheets](#) or contact us at [DLInfo\\_OPC@maryland.gov](mailto:DLInfo_OPC@maryland.gov) or 410-767-8150. Households can apply for OHEP assistance at [mydhrbenefits.dhr.state.md.us](http://mydhrbenefits.dhr.state.md.us).

*The Maryland Office of the People's Counsel is an independent state agency that represents residential consumers of utility services before the Maryland Public Service Commission, other state and federal agencies and the Courts.*

xxxx *End of OPC Press Release* xxxx