

Chapter 454

(Senate Bill 846)

AN ACT concerning

Home Energy Assistance – Critical Medical Needs Program – Power to the People Pilot Program

FOR the purpose of requiring the Office of Home Energy Programs, in coordination with the United Way of Central Maryland and the Fuel Fund of Maryland, to establish the Power to the People Pilot Program on or before a certain date; stating the purpose of the Pilot Program; requiring the Pilot Program to provide training for certain individuals to serve as navigators under the Critical Medical Needs Program; requiring the United Way of Central Maryland to develop a certain screening intake process; requiring certain intake specialists to perform certain duties; requiring the Fuel Fund of Maryland to provide certain services; requiring the Governor to include a certain amount in the annual State budget for the Pilot Program; requiring that certain funds be used in a certain manner; altering a certain definition; defining a certain term; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Power to the People Pilot Program.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
 Article – Human Services
 Section 5–5A–08
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Human Services

5–5A–08.

(a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

(2) “CMN Program” means the Critical Medical Needs Program established under this section.

(3) “Critical medically vulnerable individual” means an individual who:

(i) has a severe health condition that will be aggravated due to the termination or noncontinuation of electric or gas service or needs the use of life–support equipment as documented and certified in accordance with regulations on a certification of serious illness or life support form submitted to the appropriate electric or gas company;

(ii) has or will have their electric or gas service terminated for nonpayment; and

(iii) is unable to complete the energy assistance applications under available energy assistance programs, including energy efficiency programs offered by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

(4) “Navigator” means a representative from a medical facility or from a public or private assistance agency or organization who:

(i) **1.** is in personal contact with a critical medically vulnerable individual; and

[(ii)] 2. assists the critical medically vulnerable individual in the energy assistance application process; **OR**

(II) HAS COMPLETED TRAINING THROUGH THE PILOT PROGRAM ESTABLISHED UNDER SUBSECTION (F) OF THIS SECTION.

(5) “PILOT PROGRAM” MEANS THE POWER TO THE PEOPLE PILOT PROGRAM ESTABLISHED UNDER THIS SECTION.

(b) (1) There is a CMN Program in the Office.

(2) The Office shall implement and administer the CMN Program.

(3) In administering the CMN Program, the Office shall partner with the Office of People’s Counsel, the Fuel Fund of Central Maryland, the Cancer Support Foundation, electric and gas companies, nonprofit organizations, other State agencies, the health care community, and any other organization that the Office determines appropriate.

(4) The purpose of the CMN Program is to reduce the barriers to the energy assistance application process for critical medically vulnerable individuals and their households in obtaining State and federal financial assistance for their electric, gas, or other energy source bills so that their electric, gas, or other energy source service continues or is restored.

(c) (1) The CMN Program shall facilitate assistance to critical medically vulnerable individuals and their households in obtaining State and federal financial assistance for their electric, gas, or other source energy bills through navigators.

(2) The Office shall determine qualifications and establish training requirements for navigators.

(3) The Office shall train navigators or facilitate the training of navigators by others.

(d) In accordance with the requirements set forth in the Code of Maryland Regulations, the Office shall work with electric and gas companies to implement, for critical medically vulnerable individuals:

(1) a medical hold on electric or gas service or an expedited process to grant the extension of electric or gas service for those who will have their electric or gas services terminated; and

(2) an expedited process for the restoration of electric or gas service for those who have had their electric or gas service terminated.

(e) The Office shall establish a tracking system of the status of critical medically vulnerable individuals who participate in the CMN Program.

(F) (1) ON OR BEFORE JULY 1, 2022, THE OFFICE, IN COORDINATION WITH THE UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL MARYLAND AND THE FUEL FUND OF MARYLAND, SHALL ESTABLISH THE POWER TO THE PEOPLE PILOT PROGRAM.

(2) THE PURPOSE OF THE PILOT PROGRAM IS TO EXPAND ACCESS TO THE CMN PROGRAM.

(3) THE PILOT PROGRAM SHALL PROVIDE TRAINING FOR 2-1-1 MARYLAND UNITED WAY HELPLINE INTAKE SPECIALISTS AND CASE MANAGERS TO SERVE AS NAVIGATORS.

(4) THE UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL MARYLAND SHALL ESTABLISH A SCREENING INTAKE PROCESS TO IDENTIFY CALLERS TO THE 2-1-1 MARYLAND UNITED WAY HELPLINE WHO MAY BE CRITICAL MEDICALLY VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS.

(5) 2-1-1 MARYLAND UNITED WAY HELPLINE INTAKE SPECIALISTS SHALL:

(I) CONDUCT BASIC SCREENING TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE CALLER IS A CRITICAL MEDICALLY VULNERABLE INDIVIDUAL;

(II) ASSIST CRITICAL MEDICALLY VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR HOUSEHOLDS WITH:

1. THE COLLECTION OF MATERIALS AND INFORMATION REQUIRED TO COMPLETE AN APPLICATION FOR ENERGY ASSISTANCE; AND

2. THE COMPLETION AND SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS FOR ENERGY ASSISTANCE; AND

(III) REFER INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE UNABLE TO PAY THEIR UTILITY BILLS TO THE FUEL FUND OF MARYLAND FOR ADDITIONAL CASH ASSISTANCE AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES.

(6) THE FUEL FUND OF MARYLAND SHALL:

(I) COORDINATE WITH THE OFFICE AND THE UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL MARYLAND TO ASSIST CRITICAL MEDICALLY VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS WITH PAYING ANY REMAINING BALANCE OWED ON THEIR ELECTRIC, GAS, OR OTHER ENERGY SOURCE BILLS; AND

(II) PROVIDE ADDITIONAL CASH ASSISTANCE AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES TO CRITICAL MEDICALLY VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS.

(7) (I) FOR FISCAL YEARS 2023 AND 2024, THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF \$80,000 TO THE OFFICE FOR THE PILOT PROGRAM.

(II) THE FUNDS APPROPRIATED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF THIS PARAGRAPH SHALL BE USED TO HIRE:

1. ONE ~~PART-TIME~~ FULL-TIME INTAKE SPECIALIST FOR THE 2-1-1 MARYLAND UNITED WAY HELPLINE;

2. ONE ~~PART-TIME~~ FULL-TIME CASE MANAGER FOR THE 2-1-1 MARYLAND UNITED WAY HELPLINE; AND

3. ONE PART-TIME PROJECT COORDINATOR AT THE FUEL FUND OF MARYLAND.

[(f)] (G) The Department shall adopt regulations to implement this section.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2021. It shall remain effective for a period of 4 years and, at the end of June 30, 2025, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

Enacted under Article II, § 17(c) of the Maryland Constitution, May 30, 2021.