Categorical Eligibility (HB111)

This bill will streamline the process by which people sign up for safety-net services such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and energy assistance programs. By establishing categorical eligibility, one application process will allow an individual to enroll in all services.

Background

Marylanders who are eligible for safety net services currently have to complete and renew annually, multiple applications which are reviewed by different agencies. The result is administratively burdensome to those completing the application and inefficient from a state agency perspective. Because of this complicated process, many Marylanders are not receiving or not renewing Medicaid or energy assistance benefits.

A majority of the needed documents to verify energy assistance income-eligibility are also collected for SNAP or Temporary Cash Assistance. Yet 30,000 SNAP households who claim a heating or cooling expense do not receive Energy Assistance. Similar documents are needed for Medicaid enrollment. Based on Census Bureau data for 2021, 65,000 uninsured state residents receive SNAP—nearly one in five uninsured Marylanders (17%)[1]. Streamlining and creating one eligibility process allows additional families to be served with little to no administrative cost increases. This bill will also prevent families from losing benefits due to needless, duplicative paperwork requirements.

Solution

This bill will:
- Implement Express Lane Eligibility (ELE) to automatically grant Medicaid eligibility to children and adults whom SNAP has already found to have very low income.
- Streamline the process for receiving help by automatically enrolling someone for utility assistance if they qualify for SNAP, TANF, SSI, or means-tested veteran's benefits.
- Support seniors by automatically enrolling someone for SNAP if they qualify for Supplemental Security Income.
- Increase the EUSP eligibility income limit to 200% FPL, matching other basic assistance programs offered by the Department of Human Services for low-income families

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For more information please contact:
Delegate Lorig Charkoudian, lorig.charkoudian@house.state.md.us
Phone: 410-841-3423

[1]Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Megan Schouweiler and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 12.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2022. https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V12.0