

## Chapter 207

**(House Bill 323)**

AN ACT concerning

**Social Services Programs – Eligibility and Enrollment**

FOR the purpose of ~~requiring the Department of Human Services to enroll individuals, based on certain eligibility, in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program;~~ requiring the Office of Home Energy Programs to enroll ~~individuals~~ households, based on certain eligibility, in certain Office of Home Energy Programs assistance programs; altering the eligibility requirements for the electric universal service program; and generally relating to eligibility for and enrollment in social services programs.

~~BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
Article – Human Services  
Section 5-501 and 5-5A-07  
Annotated Code of Maryland  
(2019 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)~~

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,  
Article – Human Services  
Section 5-5A-01(a) and (d)  
Annotated Code of Maryland  
(2019 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
Article – Human Services  
Section 5-5A-07  
Annotated Code of Maryland  
(2019 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
Article – Public Utilities  
Section 7-512.1(a)(1)  
Annotated Code of Maryland  
(2020 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

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

**Article – Human Services**~~5-501.~~

~~(a) (1) The Department may implement a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in accordance with the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.~~

~~(2) The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program shall include:~~

~~(i) a Restaurant Meals Program in accordance with § 5-505 of this subtitle; and~~

~~(ii) a Heat and Eat Program in accordance with § 5-506 of this subtitle.~~

~~(b) The State shall bear the nonfederal portion of the administrative costs of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for each county.~~

~~(c) Each local department shall administer the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program:~~

~~(1) under the supervision and control of the Department; and~~

~~(2) in accordance with the regulations of the Department and federal law.~~

~~(d) If a household includes an individual who is at least 62 years old and receives a federally funded benefit in an amount less than \$40 per month under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the State shall provide a supplement to increase the total benefit to \$40 per month.~~

~~**(e) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ENROLL IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ANY INDIVIDUAL WHO MEETS THE FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS ESTABLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR A RECIPIENT OF SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME.**~~

5-5A-01.

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

(d) “Office” means the Office of Home Energy Programs.

5-5A-07.

(a) (1) The Office shall:

(i) carry out an energy emergency crisis intervention program to prevent low-income households, including the near poor, the elderly, households with children, and those on fixed incomes from experiencing danger to health or survival as a result of an energy emergency;

- emergency;
- (ii) establish intake procedures for those experiencing an energy emergency;
  - (iii) establish guidelines for the income and program eligibility of applicants; and
  - (iv) identify local public or private agencies to administer the crisis intervention program.

(2) (i) The Office shall make payments to fuel vendors and utility vendors that have provided service to persons qualifying for the crisis intervention program.

(ii) The amount of assistance shall be based on need.

(b) (1) The Office shall carry out one or more fuel and utility assistance programs to make payments on behalf of qualified households to defray fuel and utility costs.

(2) (I) The Office shall determine program and income eligibility guidelines.

**(II) THE OFFICE SHALL ENROLL IN ANY FUEL AND UTILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ANY HOUSEHOLD WITH AN INDIVIDUAL WHO MEETS THE FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS ESTABLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR A RECIPIENT OF:**

- PROGRAM;**
1. THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE
  2. TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES;
  3. SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME; OR
  4. MEANS-TESTED VETERANS AFFAIRS BENEFITS.

(3) The amount of assistance shall be based on need.

(c) For fiscal year 2023 only, the Governor shall appropriate to the Office an amount equal to the unexpended appropriation to the Office for fiscal year 2021 funding that was included in Supplemental Budget No. 5.

#### **Article – Public Utilities**

7-512.1.

(a) (1) The Commission shall establish an electric universal service program to assist electric customers with annual incomes[:

(i) at or below 175% of the federal poverty level; or

(ii) for a customer at least 67 years of age,] at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect ~~October 1, 2023~~ January 1, 2024.

**Approved by the Governor, April 24, 2023.**