

COMMISSIONERS

STATE OF MARYLAND

FREDERICK H. HOOVER, JR.
CHAIR

MICHAEL T. RICHARD
ANTHONY J. O'DONNELL
KUMAR P. BARVE
BONNIE A. SUCHMAN



PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

May 28, 2024

Notice of Request for Comments Related to MEAP Funding Exhaustion

On April 22, 2024, the Commission was alerted by the Maryland Department of Human Services' (DHS) Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) that there was an exhaustion of funds for the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP)¹ and the Gas Arrearage Retirement Assistance Program (GARA)², and that as a result, OHEP would have to deny all customer applications to MEAP and GARA starting on April 17, 2024 and extending until June 30, 2024 (before the start of Fiscal Year 2025). As a result of the exhaustion of funds, customers who might have otherwise been eligible for MEAP and GARA grants will now have their applications automatically denied. This circumstance may exacerbate customer arrearages and lead to a higher rate of service terminations. The Commission has communicated with DHS directly and has received data outlining the customer impacts resulting from the exhaustion of MEAP funding on May 23, 2024.³

Based on information provided by OHEP, the utility companies are aware of the current shortfall in MEAP and GARA funding. The Commission understands the timeliness of this matter and therefore directs that all Maryland electric and gas utilities file brief comments by Tuesday

¹ The Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) is funded through the Federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) block grant and provides grants to customers to assist in their payment of utility bills.

² The Gas Arrearage Retirement Assistance Program (GARA) utilizes funds allocated to the MEAP program to relieve customers' past-due utility bill amounts for natural gas service.

³ Email communications with DHS on May 23, 2024.

June 4, 2024 discussing what actions (if any) have been or may be taken by the utility in order to protect customers due to the anticipated denial of all MEAP and GARA applications for the time period from April 22, 2024 – June 30, 2024, as well as discussing any additional information related to this matter. The comments should also address whether a limited moratorium on service terminations, or any other action, should be imposed during the remainder of fiscal year 2024 or beyond to remedy the situation created by the exhaustion of funds. Other interested persons may also file comments either addressing the issues identified by the Commission in this Notice or in response to the comments filed by the utilities.

Written comments must be received by June 4, 2024. All filings should be addressed to Andrew S. Johnston, Executive Secretary, Maryland Public Service Commission, William Donald Schaefer Tower, 6 St. Paul Street, 16th Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21202. The Commission encourages the parties to use its “eFile” system to submit the electronic version of the filing. Details of the “eFile” system can be found on the Commission’s website, www.psc.state.md.us.

By Direction of the Commission,

/s/ Andrew S. Johnston

Andrew S. Johnston
Executive Secretary