

Article – Public Utility Companies
 Section 7-512.1(g) and (h), respectively
 to be Section 7-512.1(e) and (f), respectively
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (1998 Volume and 2002 Supplement)

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

Article – Public Utility Companies

7-512.1.

(a) (1) The Commission shall establish a universal service program to assist electric customers with annual incomes at or below 150% of the federal poverty level.

(2) The Department of Human Resources shall be responsible for administering the universal service program through the [Maryland Energy Assistance Program] OFFICE OF HOME ENERGY PROGRAMS.

(3) The Department of Human Resources may, with input from a panel or roundtable of interested parties, contract with a for-profit or a nonprofit Maryland corporation existing as of July 1, 1999 to assist in administering the universal service program.

(4) The Commission shall have oversight responsibility for the universal service program.

(5) The components of the universal service program shall include:

(i) bill assistance, at a minimum of 50% of the determined need;

(ii) low-income weatherization; and

(iii) the retirement of arrearages ~~that were incurred prior to the initial implementation date~~ FOR ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS WHO HAVE NOT PREVIOUSLY RECEIVED ASSISTANCE IN RETIRING ARREARAGES UNDER THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROGRAM, NOT TO EXCEED A TOTAL OF \$1.5 MILLION IN ANY GIVEN FISCAL YEAR.

(6) IN A SPECIFIC CASE, THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROGRAM MAY WAIVE THE INCOME ELIGIBILITY LIMITATION UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION IN ORDER TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO AN ELECTRIC CUSTOMER WHO WOULD QUALIFY FOR A SIMILAR WAIVER UNDER THE MARYLAND ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ESTABLISHED UNDER ARTICLE 41, § 6-406 OF THE CODE.

(b) (1) (i) All customers [will] SHALL contribute to the funding of the universal service program through a charge collected by each electric company.

(ii) In the first 6 months after the initial implementation date, the Commission shall consider adjustments to the charges collected for the universal service program for persons that are not eligible for customer choice.