

# PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL

## COMMITTEE REPORT

2023 Legislative Session

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**Reference No.:** CB-042-2023

**Draft No.:** 2

**Committee:** COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Date:** 5/4/2023

**Action:** FAV(A)

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### REPORT:

Committee Vote: Favorable as amended, 7-0 (In favor: Council Members Dernoga, Blegay, Burroughs, Fisher, Harrison, Ivey and Oriadha)

The County Council convened as the Committee of the Whole (COW) on April 25, 2023, and May 4, 2023, to consider CB-42-2023. As presented on March 14, 2023, the legislation amends Subtitle 13, Housing and Property Standards, to establish the Prince George's County Senior Housing Assistance Program and the Prince George's County Senior Housing Assistance Fund. It provides financial rental assistance, mortgage assistance and County property tax assistance to Prince George's County senior residents aged 62 and older based on household income equivalent to or less than 40% Area Median Income "AMI". Tenants may apply for and receive assistance twice in a period of one (1) year. Each time a senior, covered by this Division, is in need of financial assistance for rent, mortgage, or property taxes they must meet the eligibility criteria and apply for that assistance. The one (1) year coverage period begins on the date the application is awarded. A senior may receive the full amount, One Hundred Percent (100%), of their bill, as provided in their application.

During the April 25, 2023 meeting, the Committee reviewed a Proposed Draft-2 prepared at the bill sponsor's request to insert additional wording on page 3 as follows:

#### (b) Limitations.

Tenants may apply for and receive assistance for a number of two times in a period of one (1) year. Each time a senior, covered by this Division, is in need of financial assistance for rent, mortgage, or property taxes, they must meet the eligibility criteria and apply for that assistance. The one (1) year coverage period begins on the date the application is awarded. A senior may receive up to the full amount, One Hundred Percent (100%), of their bill, as provided in their application.

Council Member Oriadha, the bill sponsor, thanked the County Executive's Office for working with her on additional amendments to make the program possible. Sakinda Skinner, the County Executive's Liaison to the County Council, indicated the County Executive is in support of the legislation and commented on the Executive successfully securing \$1 million specifically for seniors for rental, mortgage and property tax payment assistance. Ms. Skinner noted the collaboration between the sponsor and the Administration and requested the Committee hold the

bill to allow time to review the amendments in another draft of the legislation prior to Committee action.

Dinora Hernandez, Associate County Attorney, informed the Committee that CB-42-2023 is in proper legislative form with no legal impediments to its enactment.

Council Member Fisher suggested a time residency requirement for seniors to be eligible for the assistance. Following public testimony in support of the legislation, the Committee voted to hold the bill for one week.

During the May 4, 2023 meeting, Kathleen Canning, County Council Legislative Officer, summarized nine additional amendments in a Proposed Draft-2A (DR-2A) as follows:

**Amendment No. 1** - is technical. It makes changes to the title corresponding to changes in the text of the bill. (On page 1, in lines 2 through 13.) It makes changes to the function paragraph and enacting clause. (On page 1, in line 17 and in line 21.)

**Amendment No. 2** – Makes the Senior Housing Assistance Program a one-year pilot program to provide temporary financial assistance to low-income senior residents. (On page 2, in lines 4-10.)

**Amendment No. 3** – Provides that for FY 2024, there is an investment and allocation of State funds to the Fund in the amount of \$1 million. (On page 2, in lines 14-16.)

**Amendment No. 4** – Provides that both the Department of Family Services and the Department of Social Services shall implement the Program. (On page 2, lines 17-29.)

It adjusts the date of the annual report. (On page 2, lines 25-26.)

Provides that the Department of Social Services shall be the responsible County agency to track all applications submitted by the Department of Family Services and issue financial assistance to the eligible senior. (Page 2, lines 27-29.)

**Amendment No. 5** – Provides that a resident be 65 years or older to be eligible for the Program. (On page 3, in line 3.)

**Amendment No. 6** – Provides for a five -year residency requirement prior to filing an application. (On page 3, lines 6-7.)

**Amendment No. 7** – Provides that a senior may receive up to a total of \$2,500 in SHAPP funds. (On page 4, lines 2-3.)

**Amendment No. 8** – Provides for the evaluation of the Program and Fund to determine the overall efficacy for continuance of a permanent County Program and Fund. (On page 4, in lines 4-8.)

**Amendment No. 9** – is technical. Changes references throughout to “residential rental”, “residential mortgage”, and “residential real property taxes”.

A motion to move the amendments was made by Council Member Ivey and seconded by Council Member Fisher. The motion passed 7-0. Council Vice Chair Blegay made a motion, seconded by Council Member Fisher, for a favorable recommendation on CB-42-2023 as amended. This motion also passed 7-0.

Council Member Fisher thanked the bill sponsor for including the amendment to the minimum age requirement. Council Member Harrison thanked the bill sponsor for the legislation and the State partners for providing the \$1 million in funding to assist with this program noting the need to continue to find funding over the next two years. Council Member Oriadha thanked the County Executive’s Administration for working with her in making the bill a reality, the State delegation, especially State Senator Melony Griffith from District 25, for bringing the funding home to Prince George’s County, and the amendment suggested by Council Member Fisher for the minimum 5-year residency requirement which is helpful in ensuring that senior residents age in place. Ms. Skinner echoed Council Member Oriadha’s statement on the collective effort in drafting the legislation at a time when so many people can use the funds.