

OPPOSE House Bill 1065
Public Service Companies and Contractors - Customer Protection - Personal Information

House Economic Matters Committee

Columbia Gas of Maryland, Inc. opposes House Bill 1065. House Bill 1065 appears designed to protect customers' information from being shared or sold by public service companies or their contractors. This bill is unnecessary as customer information is already sufficiently protected under current requirements and public service company practices.

The definitions in the legislation are problematic. For instance, the definition for "Contractor" as proposed in HB 1065 prohibits a public service company from providing customer information to any company other than a company that provides natural gas supply services. Columbia also contracts with many other entities for various services including collection of past due bills and weatherization for low income customers which require Columbia to provide personal information about certain customers to those entities. Additionally, Columbia provides personal customer information to agencies such as the Maryland State Department of Human Services' Office of Home Energy Programs, in order to assist low income customers. When providing such information, Columbia ensures proper protections are in place to prevent such personal customer information from becoming available publicly. As written, the current definition of "Contractor" will eliminate Columbia's ability to conduct many aspects of its day-to-day business.

Additionally, the definition of "Customer" as drafted is too broad, and therefore vague and unworkable, because it is applicable to anyone who has provided personal information to a utility. That could apply to any human being, even if that person has no prior relationship to the utility.

For the reasons set forth above, Columbia Gas opposes House Bill 1065 and requests an unfavorable report.

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