



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 1065 – PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANIES AND CONTRACTORS – CUSTOMER  
PROTECTION - PERSONAL INFORMATION

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN

March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Chair Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

It is a growing trend for utility companies to sell personal information they gather about their customers to data brokers who further sell the information, without the users' knowledge or consent, with almost no government oversight. Tech giants, such as IBM and Thomson Reuters, have started including utility data in their investigative platforms. For example, Thomson Reuters' CLEAR contains more than 30 million utility data records (e.g., names, addresses, service information) from more than 80 national and regional utility providers.<sup>1</sup> This bill would prevent this type of personal information selling from impacting Maryland residents.

There are currently no safeguards for Maryland residents to protect their information from being sold. Existing regulations only protect payment information, but not contact and usage information.<sup>2</sup> Important personal information collected by utility companies such as names, addresses, phone numbers, and usage data rates remains completely unprotected.<sup>3</sup> During the course of providing services, utility companies have access to extremely intimate information about a person's use of necessities like water, gas, and electricity. In other words, the utility company knows when you are home, when you are on vacation, when you take showers, etc. Data brokers even advertise that utility data can be used to find people who are not easily traceable via traditional sources.<sup>4</sup>

HB1065 would protect the privacy of Maryland consumers by providing safeguards that would (1) prohibit utility companies (including gas, water, electric, sewage, and landline phone service providers) and their contractors from selling their customers' personal information; (2) prevent disclosure of such personal information unless the customer requests it, or law enforcement

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g., Letter from Kyle Keene, CLEAR Government Specialist to Joshua RE: Sole Source Designation—Thomson Reuters CLEAR (Jan. 17, 2018), [https://www.prorefx.com/Storage/110S34471\\_051/ProRFx/Upload/Attachments/General/Sole%20Source%20Letter%20-Thomas%20Reuters.pdf](https://www.prorefx.com/Storage/110S34471_051/ProRFx/Upload/Attachments/General/Sole%20Source%20Letter%20-Thomas%20Reuters.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Md. Code Regs. 20.53.07.02; Md. Code Regs. 20.59.07.02.

<sup>3</sup> Md. Code Regs. 20.50.04.01-1; Md. Code Regs. 20.55.04.01-1.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

presents a warrant; and (3) require utility companies to collect only the personal information they need to provide services.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 1065.