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Senate Bill 486
Labor and Employment – Employment Standards During an Emergency (Maryland
Essential Workers’ Protection Act)

Senate Bill 486 requires the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange to provide for a special enrollment period for health insurance coverage for essential workers during emergencies. The bill also requires an essential employer to give a written statement regarding hazard pay paid to essential workers at various intervals. In addition, the bill requires the Maryland Emergency Management Agency and a local organization of emergency services to periodically evaluate and determine whether an emergency is occurring or has occurred and requires an essential employer to take actions related to occupational safety and health during an emergency.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected Maryland’s essential workers, placing them squarely on the frontlines across many sectors of the workforce. Because of this, Pepco and Delmarva Power took many steps to protect our employees, who remained out in the field maintaining our electric infrastructure in order to continue to bring our customers safe and reliable service. However, Senate Bill 486 is extremely broad and does not provide enough guidance on a variety of employer requirements and includes nearly every type of employer in Maryland across 15 different industries.

Despite concerns about the broad strokes of this legislation, Pepco and Delmarva Power would welcome the opportunity to be a part of a larger workgroup discussion, with all relevant stakeholders, to address our concerns with the legislation. We look forward to continuing the discussion to ensure that essential workers are protected.

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