



Testimony HB0505 Utility Transparency and Accountability Act

Position: FAVORABLE

February 22, 2024

My name is Sonia Demiray, I am the co-founder of the Climate Communications Coalition, a member of the Mid-Atlantic Justice Coalition, and a resident in Frederick County. Our group wholeheartedly endorses the Utility Transparency and Accountability Act.

Rate payers should not be paying for Utility Companies' advertising, marketing, sales, or lobbying expenses. We already pay more than we should for electricity including hidden fees such as the incentives for questionable 'clean and renewable energy sources' – most of which we absolutely disagree with - through the Renewable Portfolio Standard scheme. The share-holders of the utilities, who are making considerable profits of rate payers like you and me, should carry the expenses – they can afford them.

As we engage in a much needed transition to 100% clean energy for all, transparency is key. We know that utilities regularly lobby against policies that are part of the state's plan to meet its climate goals – literally lobbying against what we want and need. Marylanders are already suffering from climate change and the aberrant weather patterns it has caused, including extreme heat. We need electricity to keep us cool in the summer and warm in the winter – we have no choice.

We are fully aware that only 100% clean energy – to be clear: wind, solar, and geothermal- are the only sources that will save us from the worst of the dual climate and extinction crises we're facing. Yet, the utilities who serve us are using the fees we are made to pay to engage lobbyists, pay trade associations and questionable climate groups' dues, in order to help them cut costs or propose false solutions in the transition to clean energy for all. This adds insult and cost to existing climate injury.

Rate payers do not want to be forced to pay for political or sales activities that we don't agree with. It is time for full transparency, for accountability, and an accelerated transition to 100% clean energy for all. We urge you to pass the Utility Transparency & Accountability Act to restrict how investor-owned utility companies can spend ratepayer money and establish important transparency requirements.

Thank you.

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