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COMMITTEE: ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

TESTIMONY ON: HB 1360 SCHOOL BUS TRANSITION - PROPANE-POWERED SCHOOL BUSES - GRANT PROGRAM, FUND, AND PURCHASE

POSITION: SUPPORT

HEARING DATE: MARCH 12, 2024

Washington Gas respectfully submits this statement in **SUPPORT** of **House Bill 1360 - School Bus Transition - Propane-Powered School Buses - Grant Program, Fund, and Purchase.**

Washington Gas Light Company (“the Company”) provides safe, reliable natural gas service to more than 1.2 million customers in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Washington Gas has been providing energy to residential, commercial, government, and industrial customers for more than 175 years, and currently serves more than 500,000 Maryland customers in Montgomery, Prince George’s, Charles, St. Mary’s, Frederick, and Calvert Counties. The Company employs over 400 people within Maryland, including contractors, plumbers, union workers, and other skilled tradespeople. We strive to improve the quality of life in our communities by maintaining a diverse workforce, working with suppliers that represent and reflect the communities we serve, and giving back through our charitable contributions and employee volunteer activities. The Company, together with other natural gas distribution utilities, are responsible for delivering the primary source of heat to Maryland residential energy consumers, serving approximately one half of all Maryland households while providing critical energy services to residential, commercial, and industrial customers at one-third the cost of electricity on a per unit basis.¹

HB 1360 seeks to enable county boards of education to choose between expensive zero-emission and low-cost, low-emitting school buses, especially as early battery school bus models have shown significant reliability and range issues, putting school districts at risk of not being able to shuttle

¹ DOE. [Energy Conservation Program for Consumer Products: Representative Average Unit Costs of Energy](#) (Aug. 28, 2023).

their students to school and back.² While there are expectations that these issues can be resolved in the future, there is no guarantee that that will happen or at what cost. Therefore, providing school districts with workable, near-term, and affordable alternatives to diesel-powered school buses is critical. Both Thomas Built and Blue Bird provide factory-built Type C and Type D natural gas powered school buses, and there are over 5,500 natural school buses operating in the United States.

Dollar-for-dollar, natural gas vehicles deliver the most cost-effective NOx emissions reductions. Natural gas school buses are up to 95 percent more cost-effective than diesel alternatives and 53 percent more cost-effective than [...] electric options³.

Furthermore, by procuring renewable natural gas, school districts can significantly reduce the buses' associated GHG emissions, effectively making them carbon-negative. Federal programs such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) program make this a cost-effective option.

HB 1360 can be amended by adding natural gas-powered school buses as an option. Natural gas buses provide communities across the U.S. with a clean, reliable, and cost-effective transportation option for school children. Washington Gas looks forward to working with the Committee on this legislation. For the above reasons Washington Gas respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 1360.

Contact:

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² <https://vermontdailychronicle.com/new-electric-school-buses-lose-up-to-80-range-in-winter/>

³ <https://www.act-news.com/news/natural-gas-school-buses/>