

**SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT – Senate Bill 479  
Roadworker Protection Act of 2024  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

Columbia Gas of Maryland, Inc., a natural gas utility providing energy to more than 34,000 customers in Maryland’s western counties of Allegany, Garrett and Washington, supports SB 479.

The legislation expands the use of work zone speed control systems on Maryland roads and increases civil penalties for speed violations in work zones in order to improve safety in work zones and protect the individuals who work in them.

As outlined in the report of the Governor’s Work Zone Safety Work Group, over the past five years, with a particular spike following the COVID-19 pandemic, Maryland has seen an increase in roadway fatalities – including in work zones.

Columbia Gas of Maryland and its sister companies in the states of Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana – all part of the NiSource corporation – have also seen significant increases in intrusions into our utility work zones over the last two years. Tragically, some work zone intrusions have led to injuries and deaths of employees and contractor colleagues.

The Columbia Gas companies in six states had 55 work zone intrusions take place in 2022 and 62 work zone intrusions take place in 2023. Specifically in Maryland, four work zone intrusions have taken place in our three counties alone over the last two years.

Of the 117 work zone intrusions that took place over the last two years, approximately 80% were the result of negligence on the part of drivers. Columbia Gas believes we must do more to protect workers in work zones.

It is our understanding the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) and other local government organizations may propose amendment language to ensure the provisions of SB 479 apply to local roads and established work zones there, not just state roads or highways. Columbia Gas supports amendments to the bill to include worker protections on local roads.

Columbia Gas of Maryland believes the requirements of Senate Bill 479 are appropriately and reasonably crafted policies related to protecting workers in work zones and requests a favorable report on the bill.

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