Montgomery County
Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 1532 **DATE: March 3, 2026**

SPONSOR: The Speaker

ASSIGNED TO: Environment and Transportation

CONTACT PERSON: Garrett Fitzgerald (garrett.fitzgerald@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: Favorable with Amendment (Department of Environmental Protection)

Continuing the Next Generation Energy Act

House Bill 1532 makes several changes to improve Maryland's energy system while protecting ratepayers from rising energy costs.

The bill makes critical changes that would limit future rate increases associated with new utility infrastructure and data centers. Montgomery County supports these valuable protections which will positively impact rates throughout Maryland.

The bill also seeks to improve upon the long-running and successful EmPOWER Maryland program, which has helped thousands of Marylanders to save energy and lower their bills through energy efficiency. Incentives and support offered through EmPOWER Maryland bring real relief to families and the program has a strong track record of success. The Public Service Commission reports that over the life of the program customers have saved $4 billion on their energy bills and reduced greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of operating 25 natural gas-fired power plants for one year.

We suggest three amendments to further strengthen this legislation (see attached). These changes would improve the cost-effectiveness of EmPOWER Maryland by:

- Increasing the likelihood of a successful transition to a third-party program administrator model;
- Ensuring that the wide variety of ratepayers who contribute to EmPOWER Maryland will find relevant offerings within the program portfolio, while also ensuring that EmPOWER programs meet strict cost-effectiveness requirements; and,
- Removing minimum requirements for gas savings goals and reducing associated surcharges.

With the requested amendments, the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection respectfully encourages the Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 1532.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL 1532

(First Reading File Bill)

Amendments to the process of establishing third-party administration of EmPOWER Maryland

On page 4, add a new sub-section at the end of Public Utilities Article §7–223 just before line 31 as follows: "**(f) THE COMMISSION MAY DELEGATE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING CERTAIN OR ALL PLANS AND ACHIEVING TARGETS REQUIRED UNDER THIS SECTION TO A THIRD-PARTY PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR**."

On page 10, starting on line 34, strike the language "issue a request for information" and replace with the language "**INITIATE AN INDEPENDENT STUDY**"

On page 11, in line 2, strike the language "request for information shall seek" and replace with the language "**INDEPENDENT STUDY SHALL EVALUATE AND DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO**"

On page 11, in line 9, strike the language "request for information" and replace with the language "**COMMISSION**" and after the word "date" add the language "**FOR THE STUDY**".

On page 11, in line 11, strike the language "Within 30 days after receiving the information requested in subsection (a) of this section, the Public Service Commission" and replace with the language "**NO LATER THAN 90 DAYS FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF THE STUDY INITIATED IN SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION, THE COMMISSION SHALL ISSUE A DECISION REGARDING PLANNING FOR THIRD-PARTY ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM, AND WITHIN 60 DAYS OF ISSUING THAT DECISION THE COMMISSION**"

Amendments to ensure the relevance and cost-effectiveness of program offerings

On page 8, in line 14, before the words "THE COMMISSION MAY NOT" add a new sentence as follows: "**THE COMMISSION SHALL ENSURE THAT A DIVERSITY OF PROGRAMS ARE INCLUDED OF RELEVANCE TO THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF RATEPAYERS.**"

On page 8, in line 15, strike language as follows: "SUBSECTION THAT INCLUDES A ~~RESIDENTIAL SECTOR SUB~~PROGRAM WITH…"

Amendments to remove gas company programs and costs from EmPOWER Maryland

On page 4, in line 10, strike "**and each gas company**"

On page 4, in line 15, strike “**or gas company**”

On page 4, in line 20, strike “**and each gas company**”

On page 4, after line 30, include and strike the language of Public Utilities Article §7–223(b)(5) as follows: “~~**(5) On or before January 1, 2025, and on or before January 1 every 3 years, starting in 2027, the Commission shall establish greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets for each gas company plan that will achieve at least the greenhouse gas emissions reduction equivalent, measured on a lifecycle basis using the emission intensities under paragraph (2) of this subsection, of the gas savings achieved by the gas company for the 2021–2023 program cycle.**~~“

On page 4, after line 30, include the language of Public Utilities Article §7–223(c) and strike language as follows: “(c) The Commission may give priority to long–lived greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures in the plans by establishing a minimum weighted average measure life for the plan of each electric company ~~**and gas company**~~.”

On page 4, after line 30, include the language of Public Utilities Article §7–223(d) and strike language as follows: “(d) Contributions to greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals and targets in a plan of an electric company ~~**or a gas company**~~”

On page 4, after line 30, include the language of Public Utilities Article §7–223(e) and strike language as follows: “(e) Beginning January 1, 2025, at least 80% of the greenhouse gas emissions reductions counted toward each electric company’s ~~**and each gas company’s**~~ greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets established under this section shall come from behind–the–meter programs, which may include deployment of energy storage facilities.

On page 5, in line 14, strike “**and each gas company**”

On page 5, in line 24, strike “**and each gas company**”

On page 5, in line 28, strike “**and each gas company**”

On page 5, in lines 34-35, strike “**and each gas company**”

On page 6, in line 1, strike “**and each gas company**”

On page 7, in lines 1-2, strike “, **each gas company,**”