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**By: Delegates Klausmeier and D. Hughes**

Introduced and read first time: February 14, 1996

Assigned to: Environmental Matters

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A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **People's Counsel - Jurisdiction**

3 FOR the purpose of altering the scope of users of regulated services whose interest the  
4 Office of People's Counsel may investigate or protect.

5 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
6 Article 78 - Public Service Commission Law  
7 Section 15  
8 Annotated Code of Maryland  
9 (1995 Replacement Volume)

10 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
11 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

12 **Article 78 - Public Service Commission Law**

13 15.

14 (a) The Office of People's Counsel shall evaluate all matters pending before the  
15 Commission to determine if the interests of residential AND COMMERCIAL users of gas,  
16 electricity, telephones, or water and sewerage or [of noncommercial] users of other  
17 regulated services (hereinafter referred to as residential and [noncommercial]  
18 COMMERCIAL users) are affected. It shall appear before the Commission and the courts  
19 on behalf of those users in all matters or proceedings over which the Commission has  
20 original jurisdiction and in which the Office of People's Counsel deemstheir interest to  
21 be involved including, but not limited to, proceedings with regard to the rates, service, or  
22 practices of any public service company or any violation of the provisions of this article. It  
23 shall have, in such appearances, all the rights of counsel for a party to the proceeding,  
24 including but not limited to those specified in § 82. The People's Counsel may appear  
25 before any federal or State agency as necessary to protect the interests of residential and  
26 [noncommercial] COMMERCIAL users.

27 (b) The Office of People's Counsel shall make such investigations and request the  
28 Commission to initiate such proceedings as that Office deems necessary to protect the  
29 interests of residential and [noncommercial] COMMERCIAL users.

30 (c) Consistent with the provisions of any applicable freedom of information act,  
31 the Office of People's Counsel shall have full access to the Commission's records and,

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1 except as hereinafter provided, shall have the benefit of all other facilities or information  
2 of the Commission in carrying out its duties. The Office of People's Counsel shall be  
3 entitled to call upon the assistance of the Commission staff if the staff determines that  
4 this is consistent with the staff's responsibilities and if the staff and the Office of People's  
5 Counsel agree that the sharing, in a particular matter, is consistent with their respective  
6 interests.

7 (d) The Office of People's Counsel may recommend to the General Assembly  
8 legislation on any matter within or related to the Commission's jurisdiction which in its  
9 judgment would affect the interests of [noncommercial] COMMERCIAL or residential  
10 users.

11 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
12 October 1, 1996.