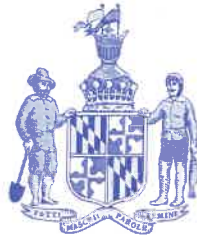


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STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION

March 5, 2020

Writer's Direct Dial No.
410-576-7942
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To: The Honorable Dereck E. Davis
Chair, Economic Matters Committee

From: Karen S. Straughn
Consumer Protection Division

Re: House Bill 1065 – Public Service Companies and Contractors – Consumer Protection –
Personal Information (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General submits the following written testimony in support of House Bill 1065 submitted by Delegate Lorig Charkoudian, et al.

This bill prohibits public service companies and third party contractors from selling or otherwise disclosing a customer's personal information unless the disclosure is required under state law, federal law or a criminal warrant, or the customer requests the disclosure in writing. The protection of personal information is of critical concern to most consumers. Merely because a consumer chooses to do business with a particular entity should not subject them to having their personal information at risk of unwanted disclosure. This is even more evident when the product being purchased is a basic necessity, like electricity.

In addition to the privacy implications associated with a customer's utility usage information, the Division is concerned that disclosure of such usage information could result in consumers being subjected to predatory sales practices by third party suppliers. Consequently, the Division has consistently opposed efforts to allow customer usage data to be disclosed.

HB 1065 mandates that this information be protected against intentional disclosure and further requires reasonable safety procedures to ensure that unintended disclosures will also not occur. Protection of personal information against data breaches and other unintended disclosures should be a priority for all businesses and will protect them from liability. The instant bill makes a reasoned balance between the business' ability to use this information, in the aggregate, and the consumer's need to be protected from unwarranted disclosures.

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For these reasons, we ask that the Economic Matters Committee return a favorable report on this bill.

cc: The Honorable Lorig Charkoudian
The Honorable Gabriel Acevero
The Honorable Heather Bagnall
The Honorable Regina T. Boyce
The Honorable Alice Cain
The Honorable Alfred C. Carr, Jr.
The Honorable Charlotte Crutchfield
The Honorable Kathleen M. Dumais
The Honorable Jessica Feldmark
The Honorable Diana M. Fennell
The Honorable Wanika Fisher
The Honorable Julian Ivey
The Honorable Marc Korman
The Honorable Carol L. Krimm
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The Honorable Julie Palakovich Carr
The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
The Honorable Mike Rogers
The Honorable Emily Shetty
The Honorable Stephanie Smith
The Honorable Vaughn Stewart
The Honorable Jen Terrasa
The Honorable Veronica Turner
The Honorable Alonzo T. Washington
The Honorable Courtney Watson
Members, Economic Matters Committee