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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SB628: Utilities – Surviving Spouse of Account Holder – Protections**  
**House Economic Matters Committee**  
**Hearing: Monday, March 16, 2020, at 1:00pm**

The death of a spouse is inevitable, yet I've learned that most of our utilities don't have a process to handle it. A Rockville constituent had trouble transferring account ownership following her husband's passing and contacted me. She was subject to a credit check, a processing fee, and the general inconveniences that come with opening a new account. This was despite the fact that she and her husband had been responsible customers for decades! Widows and widowers should be allowed to grieve, rather than jumping through needless bureaucratic hoops.

I wrote letters to several major Maryland utilities in order to bring this problem to their attention. I had hoped that legislation would not be needed. We as legislators have a responsibility to protect consumers from unreasonable business practices.

SB628 establishes a reasonable transition process following a spouse's death. It ensures that if an account is solely in a dead spouse's name, the surviving partner has six months to submit marriage and death certificates to transfer it into his or her name. This common sense solution would simplify the process for those going through a loss and protect them from unjustified fees.

The bill was voted out of the Finance Committee and the full Senate unanimously with two amendments. The first would authorize a utility to collect updated contact information. The second amendment would allow a surviving spouse to submit a jointly filed tax return from the preceding year in addition to the marriage and death certificates.

I urge a favorable report of SB628 as amended.