



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 656

Utility Regulation - Consideration of Climate and Labor

DATE: FEBRUARY 25, 2020

POSITION: SUPPORT

POSITION

Chesapeake Bay Foundation SUPPORTS SB 656. This bill requires the Power Plant Research Program in the Department of Natural Resources to evaluate the impact of electric power plants on climate change. It also requires the Public Service Commission to consider the maintenance of fair and stable labor standards for affected workers and climate effects and the State's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. It prevents the PSC from taking final action on a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity without considering the effect of climate change on the project and, for a generating station, the impact of the project on GHG emissions and its consistency with the State's GHG emissions reduction goals.

COMMENTS

While current law requires the consideration of air and water quality generally, SB 656 acknowledges that a changing climate presents significant additional challenges when siting energy facilities, transmitting fuel or electricity, and burning fossil fuels. These new challenges are broader than current considerations.

Climate change and sea level rise will also demand consideration beyond the immediate footprint and timeframe of their project to appropriately scope threats and impacts. For example, current reviews of natural gas pipelines may not adequately consider the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions from methane leakage along the length of the pipeline or at compressor stations. Sea level rise and extreme weather events expected in the coming decades may stress energy facilities in ways that would not be considered under a narrower review of projects for air or water quality.

CONCLUSION

For these reasons, CBF urges a favorable report on SB 656 from the Finance Committee. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Doug Myers, Maryland Senior Scientist, at 443.482.2168 or dmyers@cbf.org.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 107,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.