

**SB0685 Electricity and Gas - Energy Suppliers - Assisted Customers**  
**Senate Finance Committee**  
**FAVORABLE**  
**February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**Good Afternoon Chairwoman Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Tammy Bresnahan. I am Director of Advocacy for AARP Maryland.** As you know, AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in the Free State, encompassing almost 900,000 members. **AARP MD overwhelmingly support SB0685 Electricity and Gas - Energy Suppliers - Assisted Customers and we thank Senator Washington for sponsoring this important legislation.**

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

SB 685 prohibits a retail electricity or natural gas supplier from knowingly enrolling a residential customer with or submitting an enrollment to change the customer's electricity or natural gas supplier to a competitive supplier if the customer energy assistance for the preceding 12 months.

The presence of third party energy suppliers is a direct result of a wide-sweeping energy deregulation law signed in 1999. This legislation opened the door to energy retail competition and allowed consumers to purchase their electricity or natural gas supply from third-party suppliers, as well as from their local utility. The idea was that a deregulated energy market would provide consumers with choices, spark competition, and save everyone money. That is not happening.

Many vulnerable Marylanders are looking for cheaper utilities because they have limited to fixed incomes. Once the introductory rates expire--variable rates go into effect and for this population, your constituents face turn off notices and may in some cases, even lose their residency if they can't keep the lights on.

If this all seems a bit confusing, imagine what your constituents think. AARP Maryland noticed that our members are being heavily marketed. Worse, we noticed many are paying higher prices for the same electric/gas offered by BGE, Pepco, Delmarva, Potomac Edison or SMECO.

AARP believes that policymakers should ensure consumers have access to reliable, safe, and high-quality utility electric and gas services. Services should be offered at just and reasonable rates. Fair terms and conditions, as well as minimum service standard protections, must be included.

AARP also believes that policymakers should prohibit unfair, deceptive, or abusive acts or practices. These include unfair early termination penalties and misleading marketing practices.

For these reasons, we ask for a FAVORABLE report on SB 685. If you have questions, please contact Tammy Bresnahan at [tbresnahan@aarp.org](mailto:tbresnahan@aarp.org) or by calling 410-302-8451.