

Senate Finance  
02/25/2020

**Senate Bill 877 – Underground Facilities Damage Prevention – Rewrite**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Safety—for customers, employees, contractors and the public—is Washington Gas’ number one priority, and we are committed to delivering natural gas safely and reliably each and every day. Maryland’s Miss Utility program is an integral piece in creating and preserving a strong safety culture throughout the state.

Washington Gas was involved throughout the process that led to this rewrite legislation, and we are appreciative that all stakeholders were able to agree upon the final product. We are aware of a number of friendly amendments and will be sure to communicate with Committee members if we are opposed to any that are formally considered.

The citizens of Maryland deserve to be protected by this bill and a consensus team was created and drafted this bill with the safety of our citizens in mind. The bill considers that training and education are a first choice when evaluating if the law has been violated.

Currently, Maryland is a recognized national leader with the Department of Transportation identifying the state as having a model damage prevention program. While we are successful, it is important to recognize that safety depends on each stakeholder adhering to the law on every excavation. At this time, approximately 30% of natural gas damages that occur in Maryland are a result of no request being made to the Miss Utility Call Center. This bill will help to ensure that the excavating community is aware of, and follows, the laws when excavating for the safety of all Maryland’s citizens.

The state’s underground infrastructure houses critical resources and this bill will ensure those assets remain protected to provide reliable services to all of Maryland’s residents.

Thank you and please don’t hesitate to contact me with any questions.

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