CHERYL C. KAGAN
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Senate Chair, Joint Committee on
Administrative, Executive, and
Legislative Review

Joint Audit Committee

Joint Committee on Federal Relations

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 203
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3134 · 410-841-3134
800-492-7122 *Ext.* 3134
Fax 301-858-3665 · 410-841-3665
Cheryl.Kagan@senate.state.md.us

SB628: Utilities – Surviving Spouse of Account Holder – Protections
Finance Committee
Hearing: Friday, February 21, 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.

I urge a favorable report of SB628 with a modest amendment, requested by a utility, authorizing the request for updated contact information in addition to marriage and death certificates.