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Baltimore County

CHIEF DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Economic Matters Committee

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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1231
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION - DAMAGED, OBSOLETE OR
EXCESSIVE LINES - FINES**

Economic Matters Committee
February 25, 2021

Chair Davis, Vice-Chair Dumais and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on HB1231, Public Service Commission- Damaged, Obsolete or Excessive Lines- Fines. The purpose of this bill is to require the Public Service Commission to notify a utility pole's owner about any lines deemed damaged, dangling, obsolete, or a public nuisance due to an excessive amount of power lines. The owner will be given 30 days to repair or remove the offending line after receiving notice. If the pole is not attended to within 90 days of receiving this notice, the owner will face a fine of \$250 for each day of noncompliance.

Damaged and obsolete power lines are not only unsightly, but can also be dangerous potential fire hazards. In numerous alleyways and streets around our State, some of these black wires dangle low enough to catch a person in the chin. These wires stand in the way of clean-up and revitalization projects, and serve as an altogether public nuisance. The inattentiveness to these wires leave residents in neighborhoods feeling abandoned in their own homes when they can see them from their windows.

Too often, companies will run new wire without removing old or redundant wiring. Dormant telephone lines have apparently been left in place for years. Often you'll see old wires or cables hanging from poles or tangled with the live lines, including power lines. Currently in Maryland, the Public Service Commission has only limited authority to make cable and power companies address these concerns.

Telecommunication and utility companies will often point the finger at each other- but we need to put the onus on someone to take responsibility for removing these lines. Companies consistently shift the blame as to whose wires they are and their ability to force another company to remove their lines. However, utility companies own the pole and contract with these other companies to rent space on their poles. HB1231 places accountability on the pole owners to ensure that these lines are addressed in a timely manner.

For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report.

With kindest regards,

Benjamin Brooks



