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BILL NO.: House Bill 556
Public Service Commission – Virtual Public Hearings

COMMITTEE: Economic Matters

HEARING DATE: January 29, 2021

SPONSOR: Delegate D. Davis

POSITION: Support

House Bill 556 codifies the Public Service Commission’s (“PSC”) authority to conduct proceedings virtually after the end of the COVID pandemic restrictions. Due to the COVID pandemic restrictions on public gatherings, the Commission has conducted many virtual hearings for almost a year. OPC’s experience with virtual proceedings has been positive.

Public hearings serve an important role in permitting residential customers to express views on rate changes and to comment on the operations and services of the public service companies. In proceedings for Certificates of Public Need and Necessity, public hearings provide customers potentially affected by the siting of proposed energy facilities an opportunity to communicate about the proposed project’s potential impacts on their communities and neighborhoods. Virtual proceedings over the past year for these cases have facilitated the participation of residential customers.

Recommendation. OPC supports House Bill 566.