

HB30  
Climate Counsel at the MD Public Service Commission (PSC)  
FAVORABLE

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of Maryland (Established by the MD General Assembly in 2011)

The Honorable Dereck E. Davis, Chair  
Room 231, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

HB30 adds a Climate Counsel to the MD PSC, funded by electricity and gas utilities. The Climate Council “shall evaluate each matter pending before the commission (on climate change) to determine whether the environmental interests of the State and its residents are affected”.

I have personally testified before the PSC since 2010 as a BGE rate payer and on environmentally related PSC hearings on Net Energy Metering, Community Solar, and Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE). In most cases. The PSC has only acted because of MD General Assembly legislation. I have observed at these PSC hearings that the OPC has also, in most cases, not been supportive of these MD legislative initiatives.

The Office of People’s Counsel (OPC) represents rate payers. Their charge is to get the lowest rates for all rate payers and to represent those interests before the PSC commissioners in their proceedings. OPC has a full staff to evaluate proceedings before the Commissioners. We now find Climate Change considerations desired by citizens of MD that may not result in the lowest rates. The PSC commissioners need to hear those Climate Change considerations in their deliberations backed up by staff work . While many Climate Change issues are represented by groups such as the Sierra Club and the Environmental Defense Fund, they do not receive the same deference by the commissioners when testifying as the OPC. We need a level playing field.

Both the Legislative and Executive branches of MD government have fostered Climate Change initiatives including the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI). The TCI and the MD Green House Gas Reduction Plan aligns with the ZEEVIC charge to champion 300,000 electric vehicles by 2025. The transportation sector contributes about 40% of state CO2 emissions. There is a direct link to what the PSC does since all electric vehicles will use the electric grid to charge. Tariffs determined by the PSC matter as well as sufficient EVSEs for electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

I ask that you Favorably report out of your committee HB30.