



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Dereck E. Davis, Chair
Delegate Kathleen M. Dumais, Vice Chair
Economic Matters Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus (MLLC)

RE: HB345 Public Utilities - Gas Service Regulator Safety (Flower Branch Act)

The MLLC supports HB345 Public Utilities - Gas Service Regulator Safety (Flower Branch Act).

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation which improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a voice in the development of public policy affecting the Latino community and the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB345.

Natural gas is a grave threat to our climate. Leaky power plants of natural gas pollute our air and waterways severely impacting the health of surrounding communities. Many of these power plants are near predominately Black and Latino neighborhoods. Not only does natural gas pose a threat to our environment and public health but becomes a danger to safe living conditions if infrastructure is dated.

On the night of August 10, 2016, the Flower Branch Apartments located in Silver Spring, MD, suffered a large natural gas explosion from a faulty gas regulator. It destroyed two apartment buildings which housed many working-class families, several who were Latino and immigrant. 65 residents and three firefighters were injured, and seven people, including two children lost their lives.

While our state catches up to acknowledge how hazardous natural gas is, it is imperative that in the meantime our families are protected from this type of tragedy.

HB345 requires gas service regulators to be installed or relocated outside multifamily residential structures. Each gas company must submit a relocation plan with the Public Service Commission (PSC) by 2022 and the PSC must approve, disapprove, or approve with modifications each plan by 2023. It is important for every Marylander to live in safe housing. In memory of those residents who died, we must prevent what happened at the Flower Branch Apartments to occur anywhere else in the state.

The MLLC supports this bill and urges a favorable report on HB345.