



Bill No: SB 503—Public Utilities—Gas Service Regulator Safety

Date: 2/16/2021

Position: Support

The Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington (AOBA) represents members that own or manage more than 23 million square feet of commercial office space and 133,000 apartment rental units in Montgomery and Prince George’s counties. As such, AOBA members house thousands of Marylanders and take that responsibility seriously. For that reason, AOBA’s membership supports SB 503 and anticipates that a requirement to relocate gas service regulators outdoors will increase safety in multifamily communities.

Community health and safety are of paramount concern to AOBA members, and we have seen firsthand the tragedy that results from malfunctioning gas service regulators. As drafted, the proposed legislation will go a long way towards making communities safer -- simply by removing gas service regulators from buildings. While AOBA wholeheartedly supports this legislation for safety reasons, we also understand that the regulators do not belong to the property owner. Rather, gas service regulators belong to the utility company; thus, we believe that the utility company is responsible for all equipment removal and relocation costs.

Further, AOBA notes that, as of November 2019, the utility company estimated there were as many as 77,860 gas service regulators throughout Montgomery and Prince George’s Countiesⁱ. As a result of the National Transportation Safety Board’s (NTSB) extensive investigation into the explosion at Flower Branch Apartments, NTSB recommended the utility company remove all remaining gas service regulators from their service territory. AOBA submits that removal work must be completed as soon as possible and at the expense of the utility company. Indeed, mandating the installation of regulators outside whenever gas service is newly installed or relocated whenever a service line or regulator is replaced is not only efficient, but increases building safety as well.

Finally, AOBA asserts that consumers should not be responsible for paying for work that was already scheduled to be performed and already paid for in rates.

For these reasons, AOBA urges a favorable report on SB 503.

For further information contact Erin Bradley, AOBA Vice President of Government Affairs, at 301-904-0814 or ebradley@aoba-metro.org .

ⁱ Taken from Office of People’s Counsel comments in PSC Case 9622