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**SB 595 Residential Electricity and Gas Supply Billing Information – Reports
SUPPORT
Senate Finance Committee
February 23rd, 2021**

Good Afternoon Chairman Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee. I am Peltier, I am also a volunteer for AARP MD. As you know, AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in the Free State, encompassing almost 900,000 members. **AARP MD overwhelmingly supports SB 595 Residential Electricity and Gas Supply Billing Information – Reports** and we thank Senator Washington for sponsoring this important legislation.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

AARP MD supports SB 595 which requires electric companies, gas companies, and electricity and gas suppliers to submit monthly reports to the Public Service Commission (PSC) on the supply of electricity and gas to their residential customers. The first report must be submitted no later than July 1, 2021, and must contain information for the previous 12 months. The PSC must make each report available to the Office of People's Counsel (OPC) and the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) in the Department of Human Services. OHEP must use the reports to analyze information relating to low-income customers – those receiving energy assistance benefits from OHEP. The PSC, in consultation with OHEP, must provide a related overview report to the General Assembly each year and publish the report on its website.

The 1999 Electric Choice Act was passed by the General Assembly and signed by then Governor Parris Glendening. It was heavily lobbied by big energy. They lobbied and testified that “Deregulation” would provide economic benefits for **ALL** customer classes. After 20 years, what we know, after an introductory rate what we call a “teaser rate” most energy supplier rates are significantly higher than if a customer stayed with the regulated supplier like BGE, PEPCO or Delmarva.

You get those calls, I get those calls, you get the mailers, I get the mailers, you get the knock on the door, and I get the knock on the door. They are in kiosks in malls, Costco, and even outside the Department of Social Services. Calls and solicitations like I received on Friday. “You have been over charged by your “Third Party Supplier”, we have \$100 rebate check waiting for you,

Real Possibilities

press one (1) to get the details.” Third-party electric suppliers rely on predatory sales tactics to trick folks into unwittingly signing up for contracts. Your constituents – especially those who are low-income, elderly, use English as a second language, and other vulnerable populations – are getting ripped off by these third-party suppliers which often charge significantly higher rates than the electric utility default service. Enough is enough. We’ve heard it all – aggressive marketing tactics on our own doorsteps, harassing telemarketing calls laced with lies, utility company impersonation, slamming, and more. The time has come to determine if electric choice is an economic win or an economic burden.

SB 595 once implemented, will indicate whether or not low income, the elderly and neighborhoods of color are targeted by third party suppliers. Reporting will also indicate that once a customer switches to a third party supplier, if those introductory rates increase after the introductory offer expires. The data will also give us information on natural gas, which we estimate that if a customer chooses a third party supplier, pay more than double than if they would have stayed with the regulated utility.

We respectfully ask the Senate Finance Committee for a favorable report on SB 595 Residential Electricity and Gas Supply Billing Information--Reports. If you have questions, please contact Tammy Bresnahan at tbresnahan@aar.org or by calling 410-302-8451.