

BRIAN E. FROSH
Attorney General



ELIZABETH F. HARRIS
Chief Deputy Attorney General

CAROLYN QUATTROCKI
Deputy Attorney General

STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

FACSIMILE NO.

WRITER'S DIRECT DIAL NO.

410-576-6584

March 23, 2021

TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Finance Committee

FROM: Office of the Attorney General

RE: HB0030 – Office of People's Counsel – Alterations (Office of People's Counsel
Environmental Reform Act) – **Letter of Support**

The Office of Attorney General unequivocally supports HB 30, as amended, Delegate Korman's legislation to alter the maximum amount that can be charged to a public service company for a State fiscal year, requiring the Office of People's Counsel (OPC) to hire at least one assistant People's Counsel to focus on environmental issues, and permitting the Office to hire or retain experts in climate change. The bill further requires OPC to consider the public safety, economic welfare, *and* environmental interests of Maryland and Marylanders in determining whether a rate affects the interests of residential and noncommercial users.

We believe that climate change is real and, consistent with the Preamble to HB 30, electricity consumption accounts for a significant amount of the State's greenhouse gas emissions. As such, the Office of People's Counsel should have, included in its mandate, environmental considerations in addition to mere rate equities. Having reviewed OPC's supporting testimony, we think three propositions therein are critical and warrant our support: (1) "[r]esidential customers . . . have a compelling interest in mitigating the environmental, health[,] and societal costs of climate change"; (2) "HB 30 clarifies existing law regarding what should be considered as far as interests of Maryland residential customers and ensures OPC has the resources to further those interests"; and (3) better "policy solutions will further the goals of mitigating climate change, promoting consumer welfare and protecting consumers from monopolistic, anti-consumer, and anti-competitive practices of energy companies."

For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General urges a favorable report on HB 30.

cc: Members of the Finance Committee