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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Senate Finance Committee

SB 376 – Favorable - County and Municipal Street Lighting Investment Act

The County and Municipal Street Lighting Investment Act is enabling legislation that will allow local governments to expedite investments in energy efficient street lighting, thereby cutting our State's carbon footprint, improving public safety, and allowing municipalities to direct money saved on energy expenditures to other priorities. Light pollution and the amount of greenhouse gases released to generate power for street lights are important public policy issues. Nearly half of a city's energy cost may come from street lights that they have no control over updating, with potential cost savings in the millions for larger jurisdictions. In addition to the all-important environmental control and cost savings, the streetlight offers an underutilized outlet to smart technology. Please note that there is an amendment that is included in the written testimony. Delegate Carr is the champion for this effort in the House, and working with the PSC, we have identified some changes worth pursuing, in an effort to catch up to our neighbors to the North in [New England](#). There is a viable [model](#) to follow, we just need to enable the locals.

In 2020, this bill was heard in the EHEA committee, and we can guess that the utilities prefer this committee as a venue, because of the private interests associated with the private property of utilities. To be clear, this legislation isn't about private companies, so much as public goods. The service that utilities provide were the result of negotiations to allow return on investment, in exchange for a regulated monopoly. The need for light in our streets is clear, but not investing in smarter light technology is just dumb. We don't need high tech in every fixture, but we do want good technology used appropriately for the end users, our constituents.

The light fixtures are also more than the light they produce through the lightbulbs themselves, they serve as an indispensable connection to the community. Utility pole light fixtures have the potential to be smart technology hubs that provide additional public safety utility like gunshot

detection, communications opportunities like Wi-Fi hubs, and health tools like air quality sensors. There is no limit to the uses in the future. The barrier that exists can and should be eliminated with this legislation.

We take street lighting for granted, but the use and maintenance of these fixtures is one of the largest energy expenses for county and municipal governments. Advances in street lighting technology have allowed for those costs to come down across the country; unfortunately, many Maryland cities and counties have not been able to enjoy the breadth of benefits that modern street lighting provides.

In Montgomery County, when we last checked, only 49 of some 28,000 utility-owned street lights in the Pepco territory are of the efficient LED variety. SB 376 allows municipalities to tackle this problem by authorizing local governments to assume ownership of street lighting infrastructure and then partner with the private sector to upgrade that infrastructure. We have modeled the process of local governments assuming ownership of lighting infrastructure on existing procedures that have been successful in other states, including Massachusetts, Rhode Island, California and Pennsylvania. Among other provisions, local governments are required to compensate the current owners of street lighting infrastructure at a fair market price.

We need this legislation so that Marylanders can benefit from the energy saving innovations that other states have embraced. Government at all levels serves the needs of residents, let there be control over street lights for the greater good, if local governments want to take over the ownership of the lights themselves. There is no taking of any private property proposed here, only common sense enabling legislation on behalf Maryland to the elected governments closest to the people.

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 376.