



Testimony to the House Economic Matters Committee
HB 630 Public Utilities - Primary and Secondary Account Holders - Domestic
Violence Protections
Position: Favorable

February 16, 2023

The Honorable C.T. Wilson, Chair
House Economic Matters Committee
Room 231, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
cc: Members, House Economic Matters Committee

Honorable Chair Wilson and Members of the Committee:

Economic Action Maryland (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) is a people-centered movement to expand economic rights, housing justice, and community reinvestment for working families, low-income communities, and communities of color. Economic Action Maryland provides direct assistance today while passing legislation and regulations to create systemic change in the future.

We are writing today in support of HB 630.

Economic abuse is experienced by 95% of domestic violence survivors. This economic abuse can take a number of forms including sabotaging income and access to money; restricting and controlling access and use of money; and, exploiting the victims financial situation by insisting all accounts be held jointly or in their name, racking up credit and other debts in their name, and misuse money in joint accounts. In sum, an abuser uses these tactics to make the victim financially dependent and without resources to leave. When a victim does leave, it's often difficult to disentangle these accounts and the victim is left with poor credit and few assets with which to rebuild their lives.

HB 630 addresses this issue in terms of utilities by allowing a victim of domestic violence to be released from the contract under narrow circumstances.

For all these reasons, we support HB 630 and urge a favorable report.

Best,

Marceline White
Executive Director

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