

Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on HB459 - “County and Municipal Street Lighting Investment Act”

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 16, 2023

Testimony Delivered by: Kristy Daphnis, Steering Committee Member, Montgomery County Families for Safe Streets

Montgomery County Families for Safe Streets urges a favorable report from the committee on **HB459 - the County and Municipal Street Lighting Investment Act.**

Converting Maryland’s street lights to durable, efficient LED technology will improve the safety of communities for people who are driving, walking, bicycling or rolling; while also helping to reduce Maryland’s greenhouse gas emissions.

HB459 authorizes counties and municipalities to:

- Acquire certain utility-owned street lighting equipment by purchase or condemnation
- Convert their street lighting service to a customer owned street lighting tariff
- Have a fair and predictable process to determine conversion costs and resolve disputes
- Save additional energy with options such as part-night dimming

According to [a 2020 report by the Maryland Energy Administration](#), there are tens of thousands of older, inefficient utility-owned street lights in Maryland. Besides consuming large amounts of energy, these older lights burn out and require expensive, frequent maintenance. Burnt out street lights create a significant safety hazard. HB459 will speed the transition to modern street lights by facilitating municipal ownership. As detailed in MEA’s report, converting utility-owned lights to municipally-owned lights is a best practice that has worked well in other jurisdictions. The leading states include Connecticut, District of Columbia, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island.

Not only are LED lights more efficient and better for the environment, they create a brighter environment along our roadways and are less likely to be “out of service” while waiting to be maintained. I have seen the positive impacts of installation of LED lights along Georgia Ave in Aspen Hill and parts of Wheaton. While MD97 is by no means “safe” for pedestrians and cyclists, as a community member I find it much easier to see people and objects while driving through these areas where new lights have been installed. If this were the case along all major roadways, the increased visibility would create a safer environment – and would potentially save lives.

For all the reasons stated above, the Montgomery County Families for Safe Streets strongly urges a favorable vote from the committee on HB459.