



February 16, 2023

112 West Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Letter of Information – House Bill 630 - Public Utilities - Primary and Secondary Account Holders – Domestic Violence Protections

Potomac Electric Power Company (Pepco) and Delmarva Power & Light Company (Delmarva Power) respectfully submit this letter of information on *House Bill 630- Public Utilities - Primary and Secondary Account Holders – Domestic Violence Protections*. House Bill 630 requires a utility company to release a primary or secondary account holder who is the victim of domestic violence from a contract held with a utility company under certain circumstances. The legislation also requires a utility to make information available to customers on all public-facing customer communication the utility maintains.

Pepco and Delmarva Power acknowledge the excruciating impact of domestic violence and the demonstrable, long-term impact on adult victims as well as children who witness violence. We also recognize the challenges that survivors face in extricating themselves from abusive homes. We salute the sponsor for proposing measures that will reduce the financial and logistical burdens that survivors face in escaping their abusers.

Pepco and Delmarva Power are sensitive to these situations and do not want to overburden abuse victims. Pepco and Delmarva Power respectfully ask that the legislation be amended to ensure that any liability on an account, no matter when it was incurred, be assigned to the remaining account holder. We believe it is necessary to avoid creating incentives for fraud by debtors to avoid paying past due amounts.

The risk of such unscrupulous conduct is heightened because the proof required under the bill is broadly defined and may be fulfilled by unofficial sources. The bill does not require that the alleged abuser be charged with a crime, or that the proof of the account holder's circumstances come from government agencies. The Committee may want to consider limiting the attestation required in the bill to law enforcement, state or federal agencies, or other official sources accordingly.

Pepco and Delmarva Power commend the sponsor and members of the General Assembly for considering the circumstances of domestic violence victims and working to help them escape to safety and security. As one of Maryland's largest utilities and largest employers, we are committed to being a part of that conversation and look forward to working with you.

Pepco and Delmarva Power understand that House Bill 630 is well-intentioned and if the Committee is inclined to pursue this legislation, we respectfully ask to continue conversations with the bill sponsor to address our concerns.

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