

February 14, 2023

Testimony in Favor of House Bill 459

I am writing today in support of House Bill 459 on behalf of the Town of Kensington.

As a small municipality, street lighting is our largest energy expense. It is also one of the basic services that directly impacts our residents and business owners on a daily basis. Yet we currently have little control over this basic municipal service. About 80% of the lights in our town are owned by Pepco. We pay hefty rates for lights that are outdated, inefficient, and require frequent maintenance. For years, the Town has worked with other municipalities to negotiate with Pepco to provide better lighting options and better service, yet these efforts have not yielded meaningful changes.

The Town is eager to transition to more energy efficient, economical, and appropriate street lighting options. House Bill 459 will make it possible for our municipality and others throughout the state to acquire and manage their own street lights, enabling towns to reduce their carbon footprint, save money, and provide lighting options tailored to their communities' needs. For example, in Kensington we've seen the benefit of being able to own and manage the lights in our historic commercial area. We switched these street lamps to LED lights years ago, something we have been unable to do with the Pepco-owned lights, saving the Town and its residents money while also reducing our carbon footprint. We were also able to select streetlights that were appropriate for the historic commercial district and that improve pedestrian safety.

As we work towards Sustainable Maryland certification, we are eager to reduce our energy use and save money. House Bill 459 would make it possible for our municipality and other local governments across the state to do just that. We urge the House of Delegates to enable greater choice, energy and cost savings by passing House Bill 459.

Ann Lichter  
Councilmember  
Town of Kensington