

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1214
Residential Retail Electricity – “Green Power” Marketing Disclosure

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee Hearing, March 30, 2023

My name is Anne Manuel and I’ve lived in Silver Spring, MD., for 38 years. I am writing on behalf of myself to urge a favorable report on HB 1214.

I am deeply concerned about the threat climate change poses to our world, our children, and our grandchildren. Wildfires, flooding, sea level rise, mass extinctions, threats to agriculture, mass migration, and extreme heat are already upon us. We need to do everything possible to maintain a liveable planet. Because of this concern, my husband and I have been willing for several years to pay a premium to have our electricity come from renewable sources. That’s why we chose WGL Energy’s CleanSteps Wind Power for our home in Silver Spring and cabin in Myersville, MD. We were assured by the company’s literature that we were purchasing 100% wind power.

“Your choice of Green-e® Energy certified 100% CleanSteps® WindPower from WGL Energy is sourced from wind farms located in the PJM Interconnection and benefits your local environment,” the company wrote to us in July 2022. *“CleanSteps® Wind Power covers 100% of your electricity usage, and is composed of 100% wind energy,”* the literature claimed [my emphasis].

We paid a premium of more than \$1,000 last year to WGL for what we believed to be wind power. We learned recently that the company’s claims – like claims by many other third-party electricity suppliers – are entirely misleading. WGL apparently is not selling us power generated by wind. The company is not buying wind power on our behalf. We are actually getting the same mix of the local power grid supply as our neighbors who have not opted for 100% clean energy and are not paying a stiff premium. Instead, the company is selling us Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs), which are best described as a credit for the attribute of renewable energy generation, rather than the energy itself. A portion of the premium goes to the wind farm in payment for the REC. The rest is pocketed by the company. I feel like I’ve been had.

But potentially more serious than the fact that my family has been misled by “green power” marketing is the potential impact such misunderstandings can have on the climate. I’m sure we are not the only family in Maryland who has believed that we no longer needed to conserve energy since our usage was (we believed) actually encouraging renewable energy production. Deceptive claims about green power can have a pernicious impact. Families like ours were not only paying more, but using more. *Instead of easing the climate crisis, false green energy claims are making it worse.*

None of this can be gleaned from the marketing by the company. I understand that other companies make the same misleading claims. This is an example where regulation is desperately needed to accomplish two goals: 1) ensure that consumers know what they are purchasing; and 2) press the companies to make available genuine clean energy choices for consumers such as ourselves.

I believe that HB 1214 is a step in the right direction toward achieving these goals. Thank you for your consideration.