



SB905 – Electric Companies, Gas Companies, and the Department of Housing and Community Development - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Plans

Testimony before

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 14, 2023

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Mr. Chair, Mdm. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Richard Deutschmann, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in **support of SB905 with Amendments**, to provide improvements to the EMPOWER program. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We appreciate the leadership of Chair Feldman for sponsoring this important legislation.

We are in support of transforming the EMPOWER program, to better align with state climate and greenhouse gas reduction goals. To that end, we support this bill, with the following amendments:

- Consumer protection guardrails to ensure rate payer funds are used to maximize in-home energy efficiency through an 80 - 85% goal for in-home energy savings (aka behind-the-meter), and to clarify that neither vehicle electrification or gas appliance incentives will count towards the goal.
- Ratepayer protection to ensure the programs will be expensed through surcharges with the allowance for reasonable profits instead of added to ratebase or guaranteeing profits.
- A clear goal for overall greenhouse gas reductions and direction to PSC on assigning specific goals to each utility.
- A cost effectiveness test, which includes societal benefits, to guide PSC decision making.
- The establishment of a Community Outreach program under DHCD to help increase utilization of state and federal energy efficiency programs.
- Direction to electric utilities and DHCD to provide incentives for beneficial electrification.
- Inclusion of electrical readiness in home energy audits.
- Direction to utilities and DHCD to promote state and federal energy efficiency rebates.
- Some additional definitions will need to be added to the bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable with amendments committee report.

Richard Deutschmann
Columbia, MD 21045