

Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment
Testimony on: HB1186 – Public Service Companies – Annual Report on Votes Cast at Meetings of Regional Transmission Organizations
Organization: Individual
Submitting: Deborah Cohn, Bethesda 20817
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 28, 2023

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for accepting my testimony today in support of HB1186. HB1186 requires each public service company that is a member of a regional transmission organization (RTO), such as the PJM Interconnection (PJM), to submit an annual report to the Public Service Commission on votes cast by the public service company at a meeting of that RTO.

As an RTO, PJM operates competitive electric power markets and coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity, ensuring the safety and reliability of the electric grid in Maryland, the District of Columbia and 12 others states. It is the largest RTO in the country, serving 63 million customers. Members (only some of which have voting rights, and of which only a smaller subset are public utility companies subject to PSC jurisdiction) include electric generators, other suppliers, transmission owners, distributors and end-use customers.

HB1186 seeks transparency and accountability from public utility companies on their votes at PJM meetings, including lower-tier PJM committees. Votes by the PJM board, which set the grid operator’s policies and priorities, are already a matter of public record. This bill would make votes taken at PJM committee meetings by public utility companies that are subject to Maryland’s PSC jurisdiction a matter of public record as well.

While Maryland is trying significantly to reduce fossil fuel emissions. Interconnection of new emission free energy and battery storage projects to the PJM grid have been delayed, slowing our transition to reliable, low-cost emission free energy. We in Maryland have already experienced reliability constraints during a polar vortex and last December’s winter storm Elliott. You as a legislator, and the public as consumers have a right to know how the public utilities serving Maryland are voting in committees when they address transmission capacity, interconnection applications for zero emission energy generation and battery storage, and electricity pricing.

As a legislator, you are required to act “in the sunshine.” Your votes *and your deliberations at committee meetings* are public. HB1186 does not go that far. It does not require PJM meetings to be made public. Thus, it should neither encourage nor suppress wide-ranging creative ideation, heated discussion or group-think. It merely requires Maryland public utilities to disclose their votes both at board meetings *and at meetings of PJM committees*. You and we have a right to know how Maryland regulated public utility companies are voting on issues that impact Maryland.

For these reasons I encourage this Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on HB1186.