



Gaithersburg
A CHARACTER COUNTS! CITY

HB459 - County and Municipal Street Lighting Investment Act

Senate Education, Energy, & Environment Committee

March 28, 2023 – 1:00 PM

Position: Support with amendments

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The City of Gaithersburg writes to support with amendments **HB459 - County and Municipal Street Lighting Investment Act**. If enacted, this legislation would create a clear, fair, and efficient process for local governments to purchase existing streetlights and assume responsibility for maintaining and upgrading this equipment. This bill would authorize a certain county or municipality to acquire certain street lighting equipment by purchase or condemnation, convert its street lighting service to a customer-owned street lighting tariff, and enter into an agreement to purchase electricity and contract for the maintenance of the street lighting equipment.

Quality street lighting is a major public safety, environmental, and financial concern for local governments, and unfortunately, current law falls short in each area. Local governments have insufficient control over the quality of lighting, and utility companies have insufficient incentives to provide high-quality maintenance and efficient fixtures.

Municipalities such as the Town of Poolesville, for example, have already converted their street lighting service to a customer-owned street lighting service giving them the ability to provide maintenance, change fixtures, and convert to LED technology independently. This has proven to improve service and reduce costs. Many other municipalities have also explored the possibility of purchasing streetlights within their jurisdiction because despite paying hundreds of thousands of dollars in maintenance and electricity fees, the quality of lighting and maintenance is not at a commensurate level.

Not only is the maintenance inadequate but current law lacks a defined formula for the purchase of utility-owned streetlights, making it difficult for local governments and utilities to agree on a fair purchase price. As originally drafted, HB 459 would allow Gaithersburg and other municipalities to pay fair market value to acquire streetlights and install low-energy bulbs, switch to customer-owned street lighting tariffs, and pay separately for street lighting equipment maintenance. Energy

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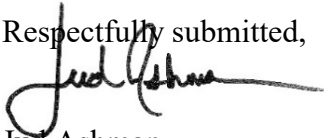
CITY MANAGER
Tanisha R. Briley

consumption is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in our jurisdiction. In order to achieve the State's climate mitigation goals in our City, we need our utility to be an active and engaged partner.

We believe this legislation will create important public safety, financial, and environmental benefits across the State, and respectfully request the bill be amended to its original language as introduced in the House.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 301-466-5350 or our government relations consultant, Therese Hessler, at therese@ashlargr.com. We appreciate your support.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jud Ashman", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jud Ashman
Mayor