

**SUPPORT – Senate Bill 516  
Cannabis Reform Act of 2023  
Senate Finance Committee**

Columbia Gas of Maryland, Inc., a natural gas utility providing energy to more than 33,000 customers in Maryland’s western counties of Allegany, Garrett and Washington, supports Senate Bill 516, as currently written. Senate Bill 516 creates the licensing and regulatory framework for the sale of cannabis in Maryland on and after July 1, 2023. Columbia Gas understands the citizens of Maryland approved the adult use of cannabis in 2022, however, among the company’s most vital concerns are the safety, health and well being of its employees and customers in Maryland.

Our employees and customers have the right to work and interact with persons free from the effects of drugs. Drug use by utility employees can adversely affect their health, impair their ability to safely and effectively perform their jobs, and jeopardize the safety of other employees and customers in our service territory. Because Columbia Gas is subject to federal Department of Transportation rules and regulations, its employees are expected to report for work with no illegal drugs in their bodies including cannabis. Compliance with this requirement is considered an essential qualification for all job assignments.

Subtitle 13 of Senate Bill 516, as currently written on page 72 of the bill, provides for employer protections to deny employment and allow discipline of an employee or contractor who tests positive for cannabis in accordance with the employer’s established drug testing policy - Section 36-1301(F). Columbia Gas strongly supports this provision and believes it is critically needed legislative language in the bill. Without these safety related employer protections, Columbia Gas would be unable to support the legislation.

Columbia Gas is concerned the House Economic Matters Committee struck Subtitle 13 of their version of the Cannabis Reform Act, HB 556, during its consideration of the legislation. Should HB 556 be passed by the full House of Delegates and sent to the Senate for consideration, we strongly urge the Senate keep the vitally important employer protections of Subtitle 13 as part of any final legislation that may be sent to the Governor.

Columbia Gas believes the requirements of Senate Bill 516 are appropriately and reasonably crafted policies on the adult use of cannabis and supports the legislation as currently written.

March 9, 2023

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