

Support
Finance
3/2/2023

Senate Bill 555 - Fair Wage Act of 2023

Baltimore Gas and Electric Company (BGE) supports *Senate Bill 555 - Fair Wage Act of 2023*, which would accelerate the increase of the Maryland minimum wage to \$15 per hour by October 1, 2023. Senate Bill 555 would hasten the delivery of the minimum wage target already codified in state law and would establish a more sustainable wage sooner for workers at the lower end of the wage scale.

BGE supports family-sustaining wages for workers and the opportunities they offer to create wealth over time. BGE compensates its employees competitively and invests in strategies and programs that build and strengthen the state's future workforce by providing the necessary training, coaching, and support for individuals entering the energy industry workforce. To ensure that our work in this area advances equitable outcomes in our communities, BGE focuses its workforce development strategy on developing the skills of individuals living in historically underserved local communities. For example, in 2022, BGE committed \$18 million to local nonprofit organizations and workforce development efforts. BGE's Workforce Collaborative, an adult vocational program, recruits, and trains residents for entry-level careers in the utility sector. Individuals who complete this innovative program earn an average starting wage equating to approximately \$37,000 annual income. Intentional and focused steps to develop the workforce and financial opportunities for Marylanders support them on the path toward upward economic mobility.

As another example, BGE's High School Internship program serves as an entry point from career technology education programs into entry-level roles at BGE. Internships and other opportunities provide the company with new, diverse talent developed from within the communities that BGE serves. Since 2016, BGE has hired 33 high school interns into full-time roles in the company. Importantly, BGE makes direct investments to mitigate critical barriers to employment, including funding driver's education opportunities for local high school students and provided funding for consumable classroom materials needed for hands on instruction. The students in our program are provided with the tools to not only be successful, but that helps to ensure that the local Maryland economy has the needed pipeline of skilled workers to thrive now and in the future.

BGE is committed to achieving equitable and sustainable outcomes in the communities we serve, through measured and thoughtful workforce engagements with our community partners. We support Senate Bill 555, which will accelerate the provision of a more sustainable wage to workers that are critical to the state's economic success.

For the reasons stated above, BGE respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 555.