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BILL NO.: House Bill 1420 – Cybersecurity – Office of People's
Counsel, Public Service Companies, Public Service
Commission, and Maryland Cybersecurity Council

COMMITTEE: Economic Matters Committee, and
Health and Government Operations Committee

HEARING DATE: March 12, 2024

SPONSOR: Delegate Kaiser

POSITION: Informational

The Office of People’s Counsel offers the following information on House Bill 1420. HB 1420 would require OPC to hire at least one Assistant People’s Counsel with cybersecurity expertise to monitor utility compliance with cybersecurity standards and support utilities in remediating vulnerabilities or addressing cybersecurity assessment findings, among other duties.

The Public Service Commission has the explicit role of regulating utilities, which includes monitoring and enforcing the cybersecurity standards of Public Utilities Article § 5-306. OPC’s role generally is to advocate for the interests of residential ratepayers. HB 1420 would require OPC to regulate utilities’ cybersecurity standards, which is a function that does not fit within OPC’s role and is already being fulfilled by the Commission. While OPC is a party to the Commission’s cases regulating cybersecurity, OPC believes that the intent of HB 1420—to enhance the direct regulation of utility cybersecurity practices—would be better met through legislation guiding the Commission’s existing cybersecurity office, as established in PUA § 2-108(d)(3).