



## Building Caring and Compassionate Communities

February 15, 2024.

### FAVORABLE HB 267

Dera Chair Wilson and members of the Economic Matters Committee

In partnership with faith-based and community organizations, GEDCO provides affordable housing, supportive services, and emergency services to community residents which includes energy assistance. Our GEDCO CARES unit helps clients directly with their BGE bills, and we hosted Laurel Peltier when she was co-writing her Abell Foundation Report about the dysfunctional energy supplier market.

First, I am almost agitated writing this testimony as we just had another energy supplier incident LAST WEEK. Somehow, two energy salespeople entered our Stadium Place community for seniors asking them to sign up for services.

Our GEDCO service coordinator shooed them off, smartly got their badge and personal information. And once again, we will send in a PSC complaint. One of the sales guys, whose badge read Residents Energy, not even a supplier in Maryland, was inside a resident's apartment!

The bigger issue here is that our GEDCO Community HUB offers direct client service help, and we are right in the "hot zone" where all these retail energy companies sell door-to-door. Our clients are constantly coming in with suppliers on their BGE bills paying huge rate hikes for BGE energy. Our clients are low-income, mostly seniors, and most are unaware the supplier is on their BGE bill.

We have seen an improvement in fewer suppliers on client BGE bills on energy assistance (OHEP). Our team was in the trenches for that bill in 2021 with Laurel Peltier, who is an energy navigator volunteer every Wednesday from 10am to noon.

#### The energy supplier financial harm is real:

1. Our clients are low-income and every penny counts. It's shocking to see how large the overpayments to a go-between energy supplier have been. We are now seeing Section-8 clients get in trouble. Our teams have had to go to great lengths, to find sometimes thousands of dollars, to pay off their BGE bills and avoid disconnection. These residents will lose their vouchers if their power is terminated.
2. GEDCO works tirelessly to fund our \$200 yearly BGE grants for clients in our 4 ZIP codes. To see a \$200 grant go to an energy supplier premium, is well, salt in the wound. That money should be paying down a BGE bill, not a BGE with a \$700 overpayment to one of the 21 energy suppliers selling in 21212, 21218, 21239. They don't go to 21210.

Please vote favorably for HB 267 out of Committee. This bill is desperately needed to protect low-income families and all Marylanders.



Nichole Battle  
Chief Executive Officer

#### GEDCO Programs

Ascension Homes

CARES

CARES Career Connection

Epiphany House

Gallagher Mansion

GHEM Community Management, LLC

Micah House

Senior Network of North Baltimore

Stadium Place

Rev. John "Jack" Sharp

(1938-2015)

Founder

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