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**Testimony in Support of HB1420: Cybersecurity - Office of People's Counsel, Public Service Companies, Public Service Commission, and Maryland Cybersecurity Council
March 12, 2024**

Chair Wilson and esteemed members of the Economic Matters Committee, it is my pleasure to come before you and offer testimony in favor of **House Bill 1420: Cybersecurity - Office of People's Counsel, Public Service Companies, Public Service Commission, and Maryland Cybersecurity Council**. As drafted, this bill requires the Office of People's Counsel (OPC) to hire cybersecurity experts, for public service companies to assess critical software, cybersecurity certifications to be submitted to the OPC, and incorporates standard definitions of critical software, supply chain risk, zero-trust, cyber resilience, and critical infrastructure.

I am amending this bill to remove the OPC staffing and reporting requirements to better align with the purpose of the OPC. Instead, OPC will be authorized to retain cybersecurity expertise as needed, and reporting requirements will remain with the Public Service Commission (PSC).

This proposed legislation stems from a 2021 report from the Office of the Attorney General and the Maryland Cybersecurity Council. This report, authored by Laura Corcoran, an NSA Fellow, identified a number of recommendations to improve the security, resilience, and reliability of Maryland's electric distribution systems, known as "the electric grid." Some of the broader recommendations from the report were adopted last year, while several important standards and definitions were omitted.

Our electric grid is undergoing major transformations as Maryland moves forward with expanding and electrifying our energy sector. As these changes unfold, and our dependence on the electric grid for an expanding list of vital services grows, cybersecurity measures must be statutorily mandated. While federal agencies appropriately regulate electricity generation, electric distribution operations fall under the jurisdiction of the State. Our PSC is responsible for regulating electric utilities and evaluating their cybersecurity practices within this framework. This bill would codify several definitions and standards which industry leaders consider critical to the successful modernization of our electric grid, a vital component of Maryland's strategy to meet our ambitious, and cutting-edge clean energy goals.

I urge a favorable report on **House Bill 1420: Cybersecurity - Office of People's Counsel, Public Service Companies, Public Service Commission, and Maryland Cybersecurity Council**. Thank you.