

HB 0267 SUPPORT
Electricity and Gas - Retail Supply - Regulation and Consumer Protection

Economic Matters Committee
February 15th, 2024

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

Thank you very much for having me. I'm Seth Yeazel and am an electric regulatory attorney at the U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and **any views expressed herein are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the United States.**

Despite being a lawyer and expert in utility ratemaking, a retail energy supplier knocked on my door, forged my signature, and slammed me into a contract that about tripled my monthly bill.

That day I was working at home in Silver Spring when all of the sudden I heard an aggressive knock with a sales rep stating that PEPCO is overcharging me and that I can save money by signing up with her company. She told me that she can show me where I'm being overcharged on my bill. I am an energy geek so I thought, sure I'll look at the bill with you.

She spent about about five seconds on that portion of my bill, scrolled down to my residential service number, and then punched it into her tablet without even mentioning it or asking for my consent. I knew that without my signature, she could not sign me up, so I figured I would be fine. When she then tried to get me to sign a contract (after I had told her I did not want to sign up for anything that day), she told me it was just to acknowledge that we had spoken that day. I said that's not true, signing would enter me into a contract. She demurred. I then asked, hey by the way why is the \$/kWh on the contract left blank (since the price for the energy is kind of the crux of the entire agreement). She lied and told me that is something that PEPCO fills out later. It was amazing how quickly she had answers for everything (as if she was highly trained).

Lo and behold this rep illegally converted me to their third party supplier. After several rounds of communication, I eventually got in contact with one of their operators and it was odd how trained they seemed to be too, saying as little as possible almost like she was talking to the police. Finally, I was able to cancel the service and receive a refund of approximately \$40 *for only 3 days of service*.

Since then, I filed a complaint to the PSC and was requested to appear as a witness for a probable cause hearing. This two day trial included the company's attorney cross-examining me and attempting and failing to attack my credibility. This supplier is currently appealing the PSC order suspending their license and returning all of their thousands of customers to SOS.

I share my story and experience with retail choice here to convey that if this can happen to an electric regulatory attorney, this can happen to any Marylander.

House Bill 267 represents a meaningful step toward stopping this giant wealth transfer from everyday citizens to economic predators, so I respectfully urge this body to issue a favorable report.