



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

I represent Southeast Baltimore – District 1 – on the Baltimore City Council. Last year, I stood with my constituents in advocating against BGE’s multi-year rate hike, a process through which I learned the extent to which our state laws and policies incentivize the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure at a time when we need to be transitioning away from natural gas.

HB731 is a strong bill with common sense measures to make sure that gas investments, which are passed onto ratepayers, are cost-effective and sustainable. It accounts for improvements in technology and recognizes that replacement of gas pipelines is not always the most cost-effective way to prevent leaks. It would also require utilities to provide advance notice to customers before work on their homes – I frequently receive complaints from constituents that they did not receive adequate notice from BGE before work on their homes, and I think that this requirement is essential to improving relationships between our public utilities and residents.

I urge a favorable report on HB731.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zeke Cohen', is positioned above the typed name.

Councilmember Zeke Cohen
District 1, Baltimore City