



Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network

MSCAN

AARP Maryland

Baltimore Jewish Council

Catholic Charities

*Central Maryland
Ecumenical Council*

Church of the Brethren

*Episcopal Diocese of
Maryland*

*Housing Opportunities
Commission of
Montgomery County*

*Jewish Community
Relations Council of
Greater Washington*

*Lutheran Office on
Public Policy in
Maryland*

*Maryland Association of
Area Agencies on Aging*

*Maryland Catholic
Conference*

*Mental Health
Association of Maryland*

Mid-Atlantic LifeSpan

*National Association of
Social Workers,
Maryland Chapter*

Presbytery of Baltimore

The Coordinating Center

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Testimony in Support of HB267 – Electricity and Gas-Retail Supply – Regulation and Consumer Protection

Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

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The Maryland Senior Citizens Action Network (MSCAN) is a statewide coalition of advocacy groups, service providers, faith-based and mission-driven organizations that supports policies that meet the housing, health and quality of care needs of Maryland's low and moderate-income seniors.

Affordable energy is important to everyone, but especially to seniors living on fixed incomes. The 1999 Electric Choice Act was passed to enable consumers to choose among energy suppliers to get more favorable rates. While this can result in lower prices, there are many other factors which can drive up costs, including variable rate contracts, which can be confusing. We often hear from seniors that they have been offered cheaper rates for gas and electric, only to find that those rates go to a higher rate within a few months.

Healthy competition for energy costs can indeed result in lower rates for all, but in the 20+ years since the passage of the Electric Choice Act, we have also learned that there is a need for protections for consumers and HB267 helps to address a number of concerns. It requires licenses for energy sales and fines for those who sell fraudulent services to vulnerable consumers. It requires that deregulated markets must actually provide savings when consumers switch suppliers. It also enables the Maryland Public Service Commission to hire more staff to oversee the retail companies which market to the public. It requires marketers to provide more information so that consumers can better understand the energy marketplace before making choices.

Seniors will benefit from the wide range of consumer protections ensured through HB267. They will benefit from oversight to protect against unfair or deceptive marketing practices and confusing variable rate contracts.

MSCAN feels that HB267 will help to ensure that healthy competition in the energy market. Oversight and protections for consumers will result in both savings and satisfaction for seniors and all Marylanders. We respectfully request a favorable report.

