

**ZEKE
COHEN**
Representing Baltimore City's First District

ODETTE RAMOS
Baltimore City Councilwoman
District 14

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

We are members of the Baltimore City Council representing North and Southeast Baltimore. We share taking care of our seniors as a top priority, and we support SB1 because it puts guardrails on third-party utility suppliers to protect our seniors and other vulnerable populations.

We have both assisted low-income seniors in our districts, some with memory issues and intellectual disabilities, in cancelling utility plans offered by third-party providers on which they have been overpaying for utility service. We have sat with our constituents as they navigate calling phone numbers that present no obvious option to cancel their service and switch back to BGE. We have seen our constituents on hold for up to 30 minutes waiting to talk to a representative. We have seen these representatives repeatedly try to convince customers to keep their third-party service, or even suggest that they do not have an active plan. From the door-to-door sales that offer false promises of lower rates to the intentionally arduous and confusing cancellation process, we see deceptive and exploitative business practices that target and exploit our most vulnerable communities.

Based on the Maryland Public Service Commission report on door-to-door sales November 2019-October 2020, we see fewer companies selling their products in our districts' wealthier, whiter, and more educated zip codes. Comparative data is attached to this testimony. We are extremely concerned that more companies choose to operate in more vulnerable zip codes.

We support consumer choice, and will note that many of our constituents, and even members of our staff, have subscribed to community solar, which offers guaranteed savings compared to standard offer service (SOS) rates. SB1 does not remove consumer choice. Instead, it caps third-party provider rates to SOS rates; consumers should not pay more for what is often the same product offered by public utilities. SB1 also offers key protections for vulnerable consumers, most importantly the ability to freeze accounts and prevent them from being transferred to third-party service. Finally, it increases PSC and OPC oversight of third-party providers and requires additional data reporting, both of which are essential to protecting consumers.

We urge a favorable report on SB1.

Sincerely,



Councilmember Zeke Cohen
District 1, Baltimore City



Councilmember Odette Ramos
District 14, Baltimore City

Comparison of Third-Party Suppliers Selling Service Door-to Door

District 1

Zip	Neighborhoods include...	% white, non-Hispanic/Latino ¹	Median Household Income ²	% with Bachelor's Degree or Higher ³	Number of Companies Offering Door-to-Door Sales ⁴
21231	Fells Point, Upper Fells Point, Butchers Hill	54%	\$88,091	66%	16
21224	Highlandtown, Baltimore Highlands, O'Donnell Heights	51%	\$86,443	49%	21
21222	Graceland Park, Saint Helena, Dundalk	65%	\$60,483	13%	20

District 14

Zip	Neighborhoods include...	% white, non-Hispanic/Latino	Median Household Income	% with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Number of Companies Offering Door-to-Door Sales
21210	Roland Park, Evergreen, Keswick	66%	\$114,409	82%	11
21211	Remington, Hampden, Hoes Heights	72%	\$79,909	61%	17
21218	Waverly, Coldstream Homestead Montebello, East Baltimore Midway	28%	\$58,847	45%	20

¹ 2020 Decennial Census, Table P8, Zip Code Tabulation Area

² 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1901, Zip Code Tabulation Area

³ 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1501, Zip Code Tabulation Area

⁴ <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/x4zeA/1/>

