



Support Utility Transparency & Accountability Act: SB 682

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony: Utility Transparency and Accountability Act

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 22, 2024

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Solar United Neighbors strongly supports the Utility Transparency and Accountability Act (HB 505/SB 682).

Solar United Neighbors is a non-profit organization dedicated to creating a clean, equitable, resilient energy system that benefits everyone. Solar United Neighbors (SUN) has helped more than 1,000 Marylanders add 8.6 MW of solar to their homes and businesses and represents more than twenty-eight thousand solar owners and supporters across the state. These comments are on behalf of SUN.

Electric utilities have been given monopolies and we need to hold them accountable to ratepayers who have no choice in who provides their electricity. Investor-owned electric utilities should have shareholders pay for lobbying, public relations, and trade association dues. There are already rules set up by the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) that limit utility use of ratepayer funds for lobbying and promotional advertising. This bill will add clarity and transparency to this existing foundation. Washington Gas recently tried to pass on \$419,000 to ratepayers that was for promotional advertising. The PSC prevented these costs from going to ratepayers, but we need transparency to ensure that costs like these are not passed on to ratepayers. We need to pass SB 682, to further limit the use of ratepayer funds for these activities that are often not in ratepayers' interest and to ensure transparency and accountability for utility spending. Increasing transparency and providing annual data publicly will allow organizations like Energy and Policy Institute and others to dig into these records and ensure that ratepayers are not on the hook for unnecessary expenses.

Please support SB 682 and increase utility accountability and transparency in Maryland!