

BENJAMIN BROOKS
Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal
Service Program Workgroup



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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB918
Retail Choice Customer Education and Protection Fund – Purposes and Uses

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
March 4, 2024

Chair Feldman, Vice-chair Kagan and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SB918. The purpose of this bill is to broaden the scope and use of the Retail Choice Education and Protection Fund to include educating customers on energy choices that help meet the state’s climate goals and developing a training and educational program for electricity and gas suppliers.

Currently, fines assessed by the Public Service Commission (PSC) to third-party energy suppliers are deposited into the Retail Choice Customer Education and Protection Fund. The PSC has used these funds for the Energy Choice websites and to prepare materials to be used at outreach events, such as Power in the Park (Montgomery County), or in my district, “Power Hour” (Baltimore County).

This bill seeks to alter the name of the fund, allow the PSC to expand the use of the fund to meet the statutory requirements of PUA 7-311 (Supplier Education Program) for which resources for development have not been available and for the creation of educational and outreach materials covering broader topics, such as residential energy usage and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Most attendees at these resource events are low-income, and if they receive government assistance, are no longer eligible to choose a third-party supplier. However, there are other choices they can make that can lower their energy use and bills, as well as decrease their greenhouse gas emissions.

Having necessary resources, provides ratepayers the ability to make informed decisions regarding their energy suppliers. It allows them to better understand, supply, distribution costs and the marketplace as a whole, while educating them in deceptive practices, leaving variety in the market while keeping our consumers safe.

With this legislative change, the PSC would be able to share that information using new materials funded by the expansion of the Fund. The expanded use of the Fund would be in addition to what is already being done regarding customer choice. At this time, there are adequate monies available in the Fund to cover current and these additional uses.

This expansion will also allow the PSC to implement the training necessary for suppliers licensed through the Commission, as previously passed by this body. Suppliers must be well versed in the regulatory requirements of the Commission and be held accountable for communicating a clear understanding of services when conversing with consumers. SB916 provides the tool in which to do so.

For these reasons I am requesting a favorable report on SB918.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks