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BILL NO.: House Bill 1420 – Cybersecurity – Office of People's
Counsel, Public Service Companies, Public Service
Commission, and Maryland Cybersecurity Council

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

HEARING DATE: March 28, 2024

SPONSOR: Delegate Kaiser

POSITION: Informational

The Office of People’s Counsel offers the following information on House Bill 1420. As introduced, HB 1420 would have required OPC to hire at least one Assistant People’s Counsel with cybersecurity expertise to monitor utility compliance with cybersecurity standards and support utilities in remediating vulnerabilities or addressing cybersecurity assessment findings, among other duties.

The amendments adopted in the House appropriately clarify that OPC is not responsible for oversight of the cybersecurity practices of public service companies and eliminates the requirement that OPC hire at least one Assistant People’s Counsel with cybersecurity experience. Instead, the bill would add “cybersecurity” to the list of fields for which OPC may hire outside experts. Although OPC has in the past engaged experts in cybersecurity under the existing general authority to hire experts in “utility regulation,” OPC does not object to the more specific grant of authority provided for in HB 1420, as amended by the House.