

**SB0918\_Favorable\_PSC.pdf**

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Position: FAV

FREDERICK H. HOOVER, JR.  
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## PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

March 1, 2024

Chair Brian J. Feldman  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West, Miller Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

### RE: **SB 570 – Favorable - Retail Choice Customer Education and Protection Fund - Purposes and Uses**

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

Section 7-310 of the Public Utilities Article provides the Public Service Commission (PSC) with the financial resources to educate electric and gas customers of the State of Maryland about their ability to choose the supplier of those commodities. With changes in the energy retail supply market in Maryland, the PSC seeks to expand the use of those resources to educate customers not only on the ability to choose an electric and gas supplier, but also energy choices that help move the State closer to the achievement of our climate goals. The Public Service Commission requests a favorable vote on SB 570.

When an energy retail supplier has been found in violation of Maryland statute and assessed civil penalties by the Public Service Commission, those penalties are deposited in the Retail Choice Customer Education and Protection Fund. The current Fund has been previously used to stand up and maintain the State's two retail choice websites that educate Marylanders on their options for energy retail supply contracts. In addition, the PSC uses monies from the Fund to prepare and distribute materials at outreach events, including Power in the Park and Power Hour events with legislators. With the enactment of legislation that limits the participation of recipients of energy assistance in the retail energy market, the PSC would like to expand the scope of our outreach and education, especially for attendees at events that fall into that category. The PSC is in the process of developing a large state-wide media campaign that will, with the enactment of this bill, encompass not only information on energy retail choice, but information regarding choices all Marylanders can make to decrease their greenhouse gas emissions footprint and save money.

Further, SB 918 will allow the Public Service Commission to fully implement a Supplier Education Program as required in Public Utilities Article § 7-311. This Education program will add another tool in the toolbox of the PSC to ensure that energy retail suppliers operating in the

State of Maryland are fully aware of the rules and regulations that direct their activities in the State.

With the enactment of SB 918, the Public Service Commission will be able to add to the activities already being undertaken to educate Marylanders on their choices in energy and energy consumption. I request a favorable report on SB 918. Please direct any questions to Christina Ochoa, Director of Legislative Affairs, at [christina.ochoa1@maryland.gov](mailto:christina.ochoa1@maryland.gov)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frederick H. Hoover". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'F'.

Frederick H. Hoover, Chair  
Maryland Public Service Commission

**MD Catholic Conference\_SB 918\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: FAV



**March 4, 2024**

**SB 918**

**Retail Choice Customer Education and Protection Fund - Purposes and Uses**

**Senate Education, Energy, & Environment Committee**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Catholic Conference submits this testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 918. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 918 renames the Retail Choice Customer Education and Protection Fund to be the Education and Protection Fund and alters the purposes and permissible uses of the fund in order to educate customers on energy choices that help meet the State's climate commitments, as specified, and developing a training and educational program for electricity and gas suppliers.

As this bill helps meet the state's climate commitments, the Conference supports this bill to the extent that this bill advocate for Maryland's environment and care for our common home. In his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si')*, Pope Francis reminds us of our sacred duty to safeguard the Earth, our common home, and to preserve its beauty and resources for present and future generations. Pope Francis tells us, "when we speak of the 'environment', what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality. Given the scale of change, it is no longer possible to find a specific, discrete answer for each part of the problem."

Moreover, the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable is a foremost pillar of Catholic social teaching. The Church strongly supports the continuation of anti-poverty programs and responsible provision of basic utilities at an affordable cost is important. In his address on the Second World Day of the Poor (2018), Pope Francis clearly illustrated this importance in stating how "we are called to honour the poor and to give them precedence, out of the conviction that they are a true presence of Jesus in our midst. 'As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'" The Conference appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a favorable report for Senate Bill 918.

**RJR-(RESA) SB 918 Letter (SUPPORT) (2024).pdf**

Uploaded by: Richard Reinhardt

Position: FAV



**March 4, 2024**

Senator Brian Feldman, *Chair*  
Senator Cheryl Kagan, *Vice-Chair*  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: *Senate Bill 918: Retail Choice Customer Education and Protection Fund - Purposes and Uses - SUPPORT***

Dear Senator Feldman and Committee Members:

On behalf of its membership, the Retail Energy Supply Association (RESA) offers this written testimony in support to *Senate Bill 918: Retail Choice Customer Education and Protection Fund - Purposes and Uses*.

Founded in 1990 and headquartered in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, RESA is a non-profit trade association representing the interests of its members, who are active participants in the retail competitive markets for electricity and natural gas in Maryland. RESA is a broad and diverse group of 16 retail energy suppliers dedicated to promoting efficient, sustainable and customer-oriented competitive retail energy markets. Several RESA member companies are licensed by the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) and serve the state's residential, commercial, and industrial customers.

Pursuant to the Maryland Public Utilities Article § 7-310 (c), the purpose of the *Retail Choice Customer Education and Protection Fund* is to provide resources to improve the Commission's ability to:

*“(1) educate customer on retail electric and gas choice; and*

*(2) protect customers from unfair, false, misleading, or deceptive practices by electric or gas suppliers.”*

As written, SB 918 would modify the purpose and use of the Fund to expand customer education on energy choice.

RESA firmly believes the ability of consumers to choose an energy supplier should be a right that is available to all customers. The ability for a customer to make an informed choice requires education and awareness. Informational access and resources are not only essential for customers to understand the marketplace, supply rates, and their ability to choose between a supplier or a utility, but it also reduces their risks of deceptive marketing practices.

The Fund has served as a primary funding mechanism for the creation of the Commission's *MDEnergyChoice* – this website is the landing page for its gas and electricity supply education and comparison-shopping pages. *MDEnergyChoice.com* allows customers to explore available supply rates and easily compare them to their utilities' standard offers service rates. In addition, the Commission has also explored and launched various community outreach campaigns consisting of social media promotions, billboarding, digital media, and town halls and informative webinars (known as "Power in the Park").

According to the Commission's report, "Reporting of Enforcement Actions Taken Between Calendar Years 2010 and 2022", issued on November 1, 2023, the Commission recommended altering the Public Utilities Article to allow for use of the funds for additional educational purposes. The Commission stated that, "*this would allow the PSC to more broadly educate customers on making energy choices and taking steps that help meet the State's climate goals.*"

The Association supports this Commission's recommendation. Moreover, we firmly aver that continued investments by the Commission into these current resources, while expanding community outreach through creative collaboration and engagement with the supplier industry is the most effective options to ensuring Maryland residents are informed on energy options and how those choices can make a positive impact on the State's Climate milestones.

In addition to expanding educational awareness to Maryland consumers, SB981 would also develop a training and educational program for electricity and gas suppliers.

During the 2020 General Session, the Maryland Legislature introduced Senate Bill 603/House Bill 928, entitled *Public Service Commission - Electricity and Gas Suppliers - Training and Educational Program*. According to the Department of Legislative Services' fiscal note:

*"This bill requires the Public Service Commission (PSC) to develop a training and educational program, in consultation with interested stakeholders, for any entity or individual that is licensed by PSC as an electricity supplier or a gas supplier, subject to specified requirements. The program must require that a designated representative of each licensed electricity supplier or licensed gas supplier demonstrate a thorough understanding of relevant PSC regulations.*

*PSC must conduct an examination at the end of the training and certify that the designated representative has successfully completed the training. PSC may recover the initial costs of the program through its standard assessment and may establish reasonable fees for the program. PSC may also adopt regulations that include appropriate penalties or sanctions for failure to comply with the bill."*

Receiving both the support of RESA and the legislature, the legislation was successfully enacted that same year, but has yet to be implemented by the Commission. The benefits of implementing this program would have better prepared suppliers to be more astute with the Commission's regulations and possibly mitigated some of the customer complaints reported to the Consumer Affairs Division (CAD). As further stated in their own report, last November, the Commission, "*recommends additional resources to expand educational opportunities to both the public and to suppliers entering the market in Maryland.*"



Again, RESA agrees with Commission's recommendation. Through the enactment of SB918, we will see the creation of the long-awaited training and education program for suppliers, finally come to fruition.

It is for these reasons that we support this legislation and respectfully request this committee to give SB918 a FAVORABLE report.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tracy McCormick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tracy McCormick  
Executive Director

# **SB918\_Brooks.pdf**

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FWA

**BENJAMIN BROOKS**  
*Legislative District 10*  
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the  
Environment Committee  
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal  
Service Program Workgroup



**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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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