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Wilder Reed, President of Teamsters Local 96

Testimony On: HB 419 Natural Gas – Strategic Infrastructure Development And Enhancement (Ratepayer Protection Act)

Hearing Date: FEBRUARY 6, 2025

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Wilder Reed, and I am the President of Teamsters Local 96. I am proud to represent the close to 600 hardworking men and women who keep Maryland's energy infrastructure running. I am also a proud Marylander, living 23 years, and raising my 8 kids here in Anne Arundel County. I stand before you today to strongly oppose this legislation that would unnecessarily burden the Strategic Infrastructure Development and Enhancement Plan, better known as STRIDE.

We are home to some of the country's cutting-edge industries—biotechnology, data centers, and advanced manufacturing—all of which rely on a strong and dependable energy network. But right now, our state consumes nearly six times more energy than we produce. The need for secure, reliable, affordable energy has never been greater.

Natural gas is an essential part of that equation. It provides 99.9 percent reliability, no matter the weather or season.¹ It is affordable, keeping costs low for working families and businesses. Without natural gas, and a safe, reliable system to supply it, businesses will look for options out of state, taking jobs and millions of dollars in economic activity with them.²

STRIDE allows utilities to replace aging gas lines, strengthening safety and reliability for Marylanders. These projects create thousands of good-paying union jobs that put food on the table and provide real benefits for working families across this state.

Some claim we can do without updating our pipelines. But the truth is, in any energy system, safety needs to be the highest priority. The numbers show that we are lagging behind other states when it comes to updating aging pipes that create higher risks for leaks and safety concerns.³ Undermining STRIDE is not just bad policy—it's bad for Marylanders and bad for Maryland's energy future.

As someone who has spent years in the field, working alongside the men and women who keep our homes warm and our businesses running, I know firsthand what safe, reliable energy infrastructure means to our state. The STRIDE program is a commitment to the safety of our communities where we live and work – and for the energy system that we depend on every day.

I urge you to stand with Maryland workers, businesses, and families who rely on a strong, secure energy future. I urge you to oppose this harmful piece of legislation. Thank you.

DocuSigned by:
Wilder Reed, President of Teamsters Local 96
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¹ Alta Gas & Washington Gas. (2020, March). [Natural Gas and its Contribution to a Low Carbon Future](#). Washington Gas DC Climate Business Plan.

² Irani, D., Sier, M., Bast, E., Leh, J., & Menking, C. (2018). (rep.). [Economic Impacts of Natural Gas Infrastructure Spending](#) (pp. 1–14). Townson, Maryland.

³ [Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration](#). PHMSA. (n.d.).