



HB1035/SB0937 – Unfavorable

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**HB1035/SB937- Public Utilities - Electricity Generation Planning - Procurement,
Permitting, and Co-Location (Next Generation Energy Act)**

Joint Meeting of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
and the House Economic Matters Committee
February 28th, 2025

Chair Feldman, Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Kagan, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the
Education, Energy, and the Environment and Economic Matters Committees:

The Earth Ministry¹ of the River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation, in Bethesda, MD,
urges the House Economic Matters Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on the Next
Generation Energy Act, HB1035/SB0937.

The Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 established ambitious goals for reducing greenhouse
gas pollution in Maryland: an interim goal of a 60% reduction below 2006 emissions by 2031,
with a requirement to reach net-zero by 2045. The Next Generation Energy Act will needlessly
and unjustifiably delay or prevent the achievement of these goals. Therefore, the Committee
should report the Next Generation Energy Act **unfavorably**.

The Next Generation Energy Act provides for constructing or expanding “Natural Gas
Dispatchable Energy Generation Projects.” The goal of these projects is to satisfy peak electricity
demands that are now satisfied by existing coal-fueled power plants in Baltimore that are
scheduled to be decommissioned. However, there is no exigency for replacing the energy
produced by these plants because they will remain in operation until the completion of a power
line, now under construction, that will provide replacement power generated elsewhere.

Even more compelling reasons not to build the new gas-burning plants are that: (1) they would
be costly to build and supply; (2) they would emit greenhouse gas pollution; (3) they would not
come online until they were built, which could take 3-5 years; and (4) they would have useful
lives of approximately 30 years, extending beyond Maryland’s target date for achieving net zero
greenhouse gas emissions (2045).

¹ The Earth Ministry is a member-created committee established in accordance with the Congregation’s bylaws.
This testimony is submitted by and on behalf of the Earth Ministry. Its members feel a moral obligation to do all
they can to put a stop to greenhouse gas pollution that warms the earth, changes its climate, and ultimately brings
great injury and suffering to people and all living beings. The Congregation itself has not taken a position regarding
the Next Generation Energy Act.

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Testimony of the Earth Ministry of the River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Hearing date: February 28, 2025

When 2045 arrives, Maryland would be required either to shut down the new gas-fueled plants, which would scrap their remaining useful lives, or to allow them to continue in operation, which would prevent Maryland from achieving its greenhouse gas reduction goals.² Who would pay for a wasteful shutdown? It won't be the power companies. Rate payers, mostly ordinary Marylanders, would pay the costs in the form of increased electricity bills.

Maryland has a better way to satisfy peak electricity demands. The Abundant, Affordable Clean Energy (AACE) Act now before the General Assembly (HB0398/SB0316) proposes increased battery storage as the solution. Power companies would use existing power facilities to charge storage batteries when electricity demand is low; and they would discharge electricity from the batteries back into the grid when electricity demand is high. Battery storage: (1) costs less than new gas-powered electric generation plants; (2) can be brought online sooner than new gas-powered plants; (3) does not emit greenhouse gases; and (4) will not need not be de-commissioned in 2045. Battery storage is a “no regrets” solution because the batteries will be needed to stabilize the grid when new, clean wind and solar power come online.

For these reasons, the Earth Ministry respectfully requests an **unfavorable** report on the Next Generation Energy Act.

² The Next Generation Energy Act provides that the new gas-fueled power plants must be capable of conversion to new power sources: hydrogen or zero-emission biofuels. However, the feasibility of a hydrogen or biofuel conversion prior to 2045 is speculative. The conversion would depend on development of an affordable and reliable supply of zero-emission fuels produced by technologies and delivered by infrastructure that does not exist and may never exist.