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February 21, 2025

OPPOSE: HB 1217 - Natural Gas Generating Facilities - Authorization

Chair Wilson and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV opposes HB 1217 - Natural Gas Generating Facilities - Authorization.

Maryland LCV opposes actions that would permit new or expanding energy production from fossil fuel plants. Maryland LCV is committed to advancing clean energy solutions that increase grid reliability and decrease ratepayer impacts. Maryland is at a key energy crossroads between increased demand from high energy using industries and rising electricity rates. As federal energy policy remains uncertain, Maryland has the opportunity to advance a clean energy economy that saves Marylanders money in the years ahead, while improving air and water quality to protect the health of everyone in Maryland.

Maryland LCV supports clean energy solutions that address grid reliability and ratepayer impacts while achieving the state's commitment to a clean energy future. After the most recent electricity capacity auction at our regional grid operator, PJM, resulted in an 800% increase in system-wide prices, Governors of PJM states, including Governor Moore, appealed to PJM and negotiated a rate cap on capacity charges for the next two years. This two-year price cap on capacity charges will offer some protections to ratepayers while allowing states to address critical energy challenges. We must use this time to chart the path forward for sensible economic choices that keep the lights on and the air clean.

To help meet Maryland's energy needs, the state should expedite the PSC process for proposed solar projects and other non-carbon emitting sources of energy. Gas facilities are burdensome to our environment, and saddle ratepayers with costly infrastructure investments that take decades to pay off, driving up their already skyrocketing energy bills.

Clean energy paired with battery storage have lower operating costs and more competitive markets, which means they will provide clean energy while lowering our energy bills in the years ahead. Maryland has already invested \$800 million of ratepayer dollars in transmission upgrades to ensure grid reliability as we transition away from fossil fuels. Combined with proposed legislation to expand battery storage and solar capacity, these investments create a clear path toward a reliable, clean energy future.

Governor Moore and the General Assembly made a commitment to Maryland when they set new clean energy targets. This is not the time to reverse course toward polluting practices of the past, but a time to take actions to achieve a clean energy economy that creates a healthy environment for everyone in Maryland. Maryland LCV urges an unfavorable report on this bill.