



March 13, 2025

**Ratepayer Freedom Act (HB960)**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Wilson and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

350.org is a global nonprofit organization working toward a world run on affordable and accessible renewable energy. We write today in strong support of the Ratepayer Freedom Act (HB960), which will restrict how investor-owned utility companies can spend ratepayer money and establish important transparency requirements in Maryland.

As a BGE customer myself, I have experienced the impacts of rapidly increasing utility bills. My average monthly bill has gone up by over \$100 over the past year with no change in energy use. While my household has, so far, been able to absorb these increased costs – many Marylanders are being forced to make impossible choices between paying their electric bill or putting food on the table.

The fact that we may be unknowingly paying for political activities on our utility bills that we don't agree with, such as dues to fossil fuel trade associations like the American Gas Association<sup>1</sup> and the Edison Electric Institute,<sup>2</sup> adds insult to injury.

Colorado, Connecticut, and Maine passed legislation in 2023 to prohibit utility companies from charging ratepayers for their political activities.<sup>3</sup> People in those states are already saving millions of dollars on their utility bills as a result.<sup>4</sup> Maryland should join this growing trend to protect ratepayers and hold utilities accountable for their spending by passing the Ratepayer Freedom Act.

This legislation will bar investor-owned utilities from passing certain costs onto Maryland ratepayers, including lobbying, advocacy, political groups, and unnecessary advertisements. Instead, the utilities would be required to pay for these expenses out of shareholder profits. The Ratepayer Freedom Act will also require utility companies to submit an annual report outlining these expenses to increase transparency and compliance and relieve the burden on consumer advocates and state agencies.

We strongly urge a favorable report on this bill.

Sincerely,  
Taylor Smith-Hams  
US Senior Organizer

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<sup>1</sup> Jeff Brady and Dan Charles. As Cities Grapple With Climate Change, Gas Utilities Fight To Stay In Business. NPR. 22 February 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/22/967439914/as-cities-grapple-with-climate-change-gas-utilities-fight-to-stay-in-business>

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Storrow and Timothy Cama. Utility group taps Trump official as next CEO. Is it backsliding on climate? E&E News. 7 September 2023. <https://www.eenews.net/articles/utility-group-taps-trump-official-as-next-ceo-is-it-backsliding-on-climate/>.

<sup>3</sup> Akielly Hu. Connecticut bans utilities from billing customers for lobbying efforts. Grist. 3 July 2023. <https://grist.org/politics/connecticut-bans-utilities-from-billing-customers-for-lobbying-efforts/>.

<sup>4</sup> Itai Vardi. [New Laws Curbing Utility Political Spending Saving Ratepayers Millions of Dollars](#). Energy and Policy Institute. 28 February 2025.