



HB 419- NATURAL GAS-STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND
ENHANCEMENT (RATEPAYER PROTECTION ACT)

**TESTIMONY OF BRITTANY BAKER, MARYLAND POLICY DIRECTOR AT THE
CHESAPEAKE CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK**

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

HB419 seeks to make important amendments to the language of the 2013 Strategic Infrastructure Development and Enhancement Act, also known as STRIDE. Originally intended to assist utility companies in upgrading their equipment by allowing for a customer surcharge, STRIDE has been wasting ratepayer money on excessive and unnecessary new gas pipes. The result is a current delivery rate that is triple the 2010 amount without any significant benefit to ratepayers. In fact, Maryland gas customers are expected to have to pay billions in STRIDE charges over the next twenty years. This price hike has already made it difficult for Marylanders to afford heating their homes and this burden will only grow.

The Climate Solutions Now Act codified the state's commitment to moving away from fossil fuels. Although it is important to maintain the safety of our current gas system, the excessive build out of gas infrastructure is a sunk costs that captive utility customers will be shouldering for years to come.

In order to lower utility bills, move forward in the clean energy transition, and prevent the sunk costs of unnecessary gas infrastructure expansion, the STRIDE program must be reformed.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB419.