

HB1035/SB937 - UNFAVORABLE

Pamela Winston
8005 Glenside Drive
Takoma Park, MD 20912
p.winston@live.com
301-434-5557

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

Joint Meeting of Education, Energy and the Environment Committee and the 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,

I have lived in Takoma Park for the past 25 years. I also volunteer with the Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN). **I strongly recommend an unfavorable report on HB1035/SB937, the Next Generation Energy Act.**

With energy prices rising and Maryland families feeling pressure from increased expenses everywhere, legislators understandably seek to address these concerns. It is critical, however, that the steps we take now actually address the problem in an effective, efficient, responsible, and time-sensitive fashion. It is tempting to jump on solutions that appear responsive and quick to employ. However, many so-called solutions are in fact risky for Marylanders, with under-appreciated negatives for the state, the nation, and the planet we must call home. It is especially important to continue moving our state's energy policy in a responsible and effective direction as we see the federal government abdicate its role to protect and defend us on the national level. Maryland has long been a leader in responsible energy policy and sincere efforts to address the climate crisis. It has never been more important that we continue in this role.

Solutions to our climate crisis are under attack, and policies are being decided at the state and federal levels that will affect all people on earth for generations to come. The irresponsible decisions many policymakers are taking now will have a long reach. My 22-year-old son, who I love more than life itself, is in the crosshairs of this backsliding of efforts to replace fossil fuel plants with renewable energy. Any *new* fossil fuel plants would likely operate until he reaches late middle age, pumping toxic greenhouse gases into the air and accelerating the climate change that is harming him and his peers, all the while bringing the worst effects to the people who did the least to create the problem. This assault on environmental justice makes it all the more important that we take a very different direction from what we are seeing out of Washington. We should be closing down fossil fuel plants, not building new ones!

I therefore reiterate my strong **opposition to a new gas power plant** in Maryland, and my **support for Del. Charkoudian's AACE (Affordable Abundant Clean Energy) Act**. The AACE addresses Maryland's energy needs without saddling my son and others with a costly, polluting methane gas power plant. I

also implore you to keep a strong focus on environmental justice in your decisionmaking. While a so-called solution such as a new gas plant may appear to help lower income people economically, in the end its worst environmental and economic impacts will hit them the hardest.

It's also important to keep in mind that the future energy demand for data centers to supply AI and other tech needs is *highly uncertain*. In just the last few days, we are seeing news that data centers may *not* need the energy capacity that had originally been projected. In light of the emergence of the energy-efficient DeepSeek AI model, Microsoft has canceled some leases for data centers, raising questions about energy capacity estimates for the future.

The Next Generation Energy Act would allow for new gas plants to be constructed in Maryland. This is a mistake. Gas plants take on average around 7 years to come online--too long to help with today's high energy bills. Gas plants are very expensive, with costs typically born by ratepayers (and hitting the lowest income the hardest). Gas plants are highly polluting, and are typically located in the lowest income communities, subjecting them to the worst exposures and the worst health effects. Finally, construction of new gas plants would go against the climate goals set forth in the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022.

Please be skeptical of appeals by the utility companies to support a new gas power plant—they may win with a new plant, but the rest of us lose. There are other options that include renewable energy sources supplemented by battery storage for power as needed at night and other times. These options would be faster to employ, cleaner, and cheaper. Maryland residents need an energy policy that *takes the long view*, not one that falls back on costly, dangerous, inequitable, and obsolete approaches.

I respectfully request an unfavorable report on HB1035/SB937.

Thank you so much for your leadership.

Pamela Winston