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**HB 960 Investor-owned Electric, Gas, and Gas and Electric Companies – Cost Recovery –
Limitations and Reporting Requirements
(Ratepayer Freedom Act)
Economic Matters Committee
March 6, 2025
FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon, Chair Wilson and members of the Economic Matters Committee. My name is Laurel Peltier, and I am a proud member of AARP Maryland and a resident of Baltimore County. AARP Maryland represents more than 850,000 members across the state, making it one of the largest membership-based organizations advocating on behalf of older Marylanders. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 960. We thank Delegate Johnson for introducing this important legislation on behalf of Maryland ratepayers.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering people to live their best lives as they age. Our work focuses on issues that matter most to older adults and their families, including affordable utilities, financial security, healthcare access, and protection from financial exploitation.

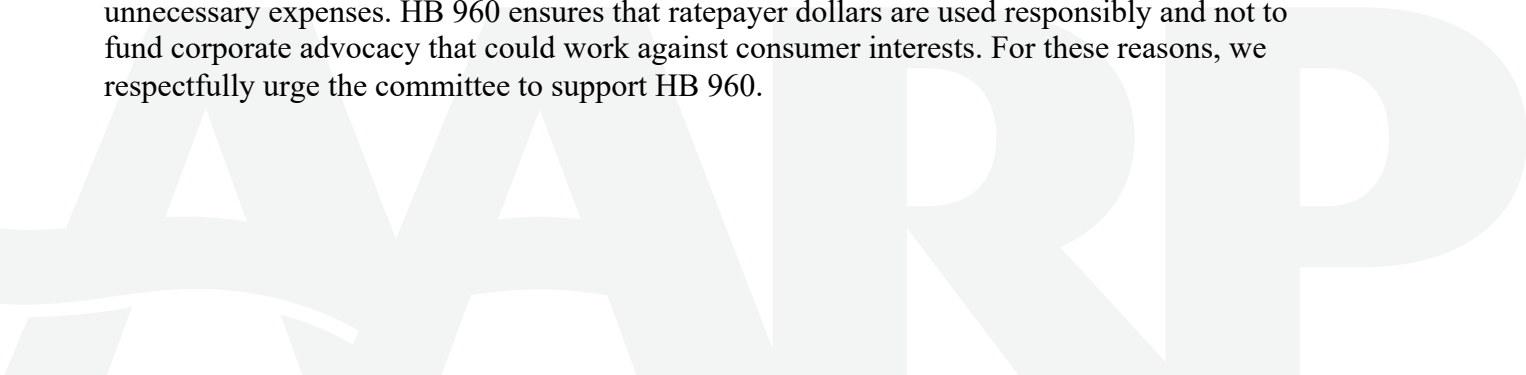
HB 960 is an important step toward ensuring transparency and fairness in utility spending. The bill clarifies and codifies existing utility laws by prohibiting regulated electric and gas utilities from using ratepayer funds for certain advocacy efforts, advertisements, membership dues, sponsorships, and lobbying expenses. This protection is particularly critical for older Marylanders, many of whom live on fixed incomes and struggle with rising energy costs.

Furthermore, HB 960 strengthens accountability by requiring utilities to itemize and disclose these expenses in their annual reports to the Public Service Commission.

This bill will provide two key benefits for Maryland's older residents and all ratepayers:

- Greater transparency regarding how ratepayer funds are used—ensuring that money is not being spent to advance corporate interests at the expense of consumers.
- Stronger protections to prevent regulated utilities from passing on costs that do not directly benefit ratepayers.

Older Marylanders, like all utility customers, deserve fair and just rates, free from hidden or unnecessary expenses. HB 960 ensures that ratepayer dollars are used responsibly and not to fund corporate advocacy that could work against consumer interests. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to support HB 960.



For questions or additional information, please contact Tammy Bresnahan, Director of Advocacy, at tbresnahan@aarp.org or 410-302-8451.