



**Testimony in SUPPORT for HB419**  
**Natural Gas - Strategic Infrastructure Development and Enhancement (Ratepayer Protection Act)**

House Economic Matters Committee

Jose Coronado-Flores , On Behalf of CASA

February 6th, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Wilson and Vice Chair Crosby,

CASA is pleased to offer **favorable testimony in support of HB419**, because it is important legislation that will address wasteful utility gas infrastructure spending, STRIDE-related rate increases, and reductions in fossil fuel infrastructure. CASA is the largest immigrant services and advocacy organization in Maryland, and in the Mid-Atlantic region, with a membership of over 60,000 Black and Latino immigrants and working families in Maryland. We represent low-income rate payers who are mostly served by BGE, PEPCO, Washington Gas, and Potomac Edison. We would like to thank Del. Embry for her leadership on this issue.

I want to highlight 3 points that inform our support of HB419. First, CASA members who live in affordable housing stock are overwhelmingly gas rate payers. Second, living in old inefficient housing puts low-income tenants as greater contributors to commodity rates on their utility bills. Lastly, large natural gas transmission lines and storage facilities are adjacent to or located in communities that are already overburdened with other forms of industrial or traffic pollution and infrastructure.

To guide my testimony, I want to use specific geographic examples. Near our Langley Park office where many CASA members reside, 89% of homes utilize natural gas for heating and cooking according to geographic statistics offered by the Washington Post. Using the same tool, 78% of homes in the Brooklyn Park area adjacent to Curtis Bay where hundreds of CASA members live also utilize natural gas. In these same two areas, you will find aging, inefficient, and un-weatherized homes and apartments.

This is key in understanding the disproportionate financial burden that residents of these communities face in relation to utility rates, gas services, and gas expansion. During the winter months when our members try to heat their homes, they struggle to achieve comfortable temperatures. When old apartments have unsealed windows, cracks in the walls and floors, and loose and broken doors, it is extremely difficult for heaters to efficiently heat the space. This results in tenants having to use their heaters for longer times at higher intensities just to get minimal heating. This drives up their commodity costs, resulting in even higher bills paired with the increasing delivery costs.

The last point I want to share is the issue of proximity to major transmission pipelines and service lines in urban areas. The BGE Spring Gardens Peak Shaving LNG Facility and transmission line go through low-wealth and minority communities like Westport, which is already overburdened by traffic, energy production, and industrial pollution.

We need to start planning in-depth how MD will phase out gas. This same conversation is linked to protecting Maryland's low-income rate payers and addressing unjust placement of excessive pipelines and facilities in urban areas. CASA urges a favorable report.

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