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Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB1217 “Natural Gas Generating Facilities – Authorization”

Position: Unfavorable

Hearing Date: February 21, 2025

Valleys Planning Council, a non-profit that conserves land and resources, preserves historic character and maintains the rural feel and land uses in northwestern Baltimore County, urges an unfavorable report on HB1217, which would authorize the construction, permitting, and operation of natural gas generating facilities.

On its face, this bill seems to address Maryland’s immediate energy needs. Natural gas power plants can be built relatively quickly and cheaply compared to other types of energy. A natural gas plant can be built in 1-2 years. However, the payback period can be up to 17 years¹.

As Maryland works to increase the amount of “renewable” energy it uses to meet its energy needs (HB0505 seeks to change the word “renewable” to “clean”, though they mean two different things), a gas plant may at some future time be required to decrease its production of energy, either increasing the amount of time before it becomes profitable or reducing the overall profits it can make. With this level of uncertainty, why would anyone build a new gas plant, unless they are counting on laws changing to allow gas plants to continue operating at full throttle for decades into the future? Unintended but foreseeable consequences make it difficult to support this bill.

Gas plants may be cleaner than coal or oil plants, but they emit greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming, something we must work to limit. Valleys Planning Council urges an unfavorable report on HB1217.

Renée Hamidi
Executive Director
Valleys Planning Council

¹ Carvalho, Rexon Joe, "Evaluating the Profitability of Natural Gas Combustion Turbine Power Plants in the US and its Implications on Future of Natural Gas as a Bridge Fuel for Electricity Generation" (2018). Thesis. Rochester Institute of Technology.

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