



HB - SUPPORT  
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HB0960

Meeting of the Economic Matters Committee

March 13, 2025

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Committee, on behalf of Elders Climate Action Maryland, I urge a favorable report on HB0960

Elders Climate Action is a nationwide organization devoted to ensuring that our children, grandchildren, and future generations have a world in which they can thrive. The Maryland Chapter has members across the state.

Each day, we see the climate crisis more clearly. We know that Maryland is at risk for sea level rise, flooding from intense rainfall, heat waves, and other extreme weather events. Maryland can also be a leader in moving us to a safer, cleaner future where we all can thrive. The clean energy transition is an essential part of that future.

The utilities that serve the state of Maryland play a vital role in that transition. Each of them is a regulated monopoly. That unusual status was created to meet the need to build a network to supply electricity, gas, and water seamlessly to customers throughout the United States. In many ways, that has served us well, but the regulatory piece is crucial.

Unlike most of the businesses that customers deal with, we have little or no choice with our utilities. For the system to work equitably and efficiently, ratepayers should only be required to pay for services that benefit them. Expenses like lobbying and advocacy should be borne by shareholders, not by ratepayers. This is

especially true since utilities often lobby or advocate for things that are in the short-term interest of their shareholders but run counter to the interests of ratepayers and the community as a whole. We see that reflected in utility bills, air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Maryland law bars utilities from charging ratepayers for lobbying, but the law is weak and plagued with loopholes. The Ratepayer Protection Act would close loopholes and provide essential protections. It more clearly defines lobbying and how utilities can use ratepayer money. It would also require the utilities to submit a more detailed annual report on those expenses that would allow the Public Service Commission, the Office of Peoples Counsel, and others to make sure funds are being spent appropriately. That would increase public confidence, which is particularly important in this time of rising utility rates.

For all of these reasons, we strongly urge a favorable report on HB0960.

Thank you.