



TESTIMONY OF AARON BAST, BUSINESS MANAGER & FINANCIAL SECRETARY-
TREASURER, IRON WORKERS LOCAL 5

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE
ENVIRONMENT, AND THE HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE

IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 716 – THE DECARBONIZATION INFRASTRUCTURE
SOLUTIONS ACT OF 2025

Chairs Feldman and Wilson, and members of the Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee, and the House Economic Matters Committee,

On behalf of Iron Workers Local 5, I submit this testimony in SB716 and a pathway for a stronger energy industry in Maryland. Our union represents over 1,200 highly skilled ironworkers who have been integral to constructing and maintaining Maryland's critical infrastructure, including power plants, bridges, industrial facilities, and large-scale energy projects. Notably, our members played a pivotal role in building the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant in the 1970s and continue to ensure its structural integrity today.

As Maryland transitions toward a cleaner and more resilient energy system, it is imperative that legislative policies prioritize long-term energy security, economic sustainability, and workforce development. A well-planned energy strategy must not only address grid reliability and affordability but also ensure robust labor protections and job opportunities for skilled workers.

The decisions made in this legislative session will have a lasting impact on the state's economy, energy reliability, and union workforce. Maryland must adopt an approach that supports large-scale infrastructure development while maintaining a robust, high-wage labor market.

The Role of Iron Workers in Maryland's Energy & Infrastructure Future

The men and women of Iron Workers Local 5 are responsible for constructing and maintaining the backbone of Maryland's energy and industrial sectors. From power generation facilities to steel infrastructure for advanced energy systems, our work ensures that the state's energy grid is safe, resilient, and capable of supporting a growing economy.





Specifically, our involvement in the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant underscores our commitment to Maryland's energy infrastructure. Located in Lusby, Maryland, Calvert Cliffs' two reactors can produce up to 1,790 megawatts (MW) of clean, carbon-free energy, enough to power more than 1.3 million homes. Our ongoing maintenance efforts ensure the plant operates safely and efficiently, contributing significantly to the state's energy needs.

As Maryland moves toward decarbonization, energy policy must consider:

- **Structural and Industrial Investment:** Expanding energy capacity, including nuclear, renewable, and advanced power systems, requires significant steel construction, heavy rigging, and precision welding. The workforce supporting these industries must be union-trained, well-compensated, and protected through prevailing wage laws.
- **Reliability & Baseload Power:** While solar and wind are valuable energy sources, they require firm, dispatchable generation to maintain grid stability. Without investment in stable, large-scale power infrastructure, Maryland risks energy shortages, price volatility, and increased reliance on out-of-state electricity.
- **Scalability & Long-Term Planning:** A piecemeal energy strategy that relies on short-term incentives or mandates without long-term workforce and infrastructure planning will undermine job security and economic stability.

A strong, market-driven approach to energy expansion is the best way to create high-quality construction jobs, enhance energy security, and sustain economic growth.

The Right Energy Strategy: Market-Based Solutions Over Mandated Procurement

There are two competing approaches to energy expansion in Maryland:

1. A market-based framework that integrates nuclear and firm power into the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), allowing competitive investment and private-sector development.
2. A state-directed procurement model that mandates power generation projects through a surcharge on ratepayers, removing private-sector competition from the equation.

The market-based approach, as outlined in Senate Bill 716, provides the strongest foundation for energy investment by:

- Encouraging private capital investment instead of relying on government mandates.



- Ensuring cost efficiency by allowing energy projects to compete based on performance and price rather than bureaucratic selection.
- Facilitating faster project timelines by reducing unnecessary regulatory delays.

By contrast, a government-mandated procurement model, such as the one proposed in HB 1035 / SB 937, presents serious risks to both ratepayers and workers:

- Higher costs for consumers due to a nonbypassable surcharge on electricity bills, increasing the financial burden on households and businesses.
- Greater regulatory complexity, slowing the development of essential energy projects.
- Uncertain long-term viability, as the program's subsidies are set to expire by 2030, leaving Maryland without a sustainable plan for continued energy expansion.

By integrating nuclear and firm generation into the RPS, Maryland can maximize energy reliability while ensuring stable, well-paying construction jobs for union workers.

Energy Expansion as a Driver of Union Jobs

The construction industry, and specifically the ironworking trade, has a direct stake in the success of Maryland's energy policy. Large-scale energy projects generate thousands of high-wage, long-term union jobs that support families, local businesses, and tax revenue for the state.

A market-driven energy expansion plan supports:

- Significant job creation in structural steel erection, welding, and industrial construction.
- Prevailing wage protections, ensuring that public infrastructure investments lead to sustainable, middle-class careers.
- Registered apprenticeship programs, allowing new generations of workers to develop in-demand skills for the modern energy economy.

Without a reliable, long-term framework for energy investment, Maryland risks displacing thousands of skilled workers and losing industrial construction jobs to other states.

Ensuring Stability for Maryland's Workforce and Energy Grid



A strong energy future is one that prioritizes both economic growth and workforce security. This requires a predictable, sustainable investment model that guarantees:

- A long-term funding mechanism for energy projects beyond 2030, unlike HB 1035's short-term funding window.
- Robust labor protections, including collective bargaining agreements, apprenticeship utilization, and strong wage standards.
- An infrastructure development strategy that ensures Maryland's energy grid remains strong, resilient, and reliable for decades to come.

Maryland cannot afford to adopt an inefficient, state-directed procurement model that jeopardizes long-term project development and job security. A market-based RPS-driven approach is the only path forward that balances economic, energy, and labor interests.

Conclusion

Maryland must move forward with an energy policy that supports growth, grid reliability, and skilled union labor. HB 1035 / SB 937's government procurement model introduces unnecessary risks to workers, businesses, and consumers, while SB 716 provides a stable, market-driven pathway for energy expansion.

For these reasons, Iron Workers Local 5 urges the Committee to support Senate Bill 716 and reject the flawed approach of HB 1035 / SB 937.

We stand ready to work alongside state leaders to develop infrastructure that powers Maryland's future, secures good-paying jobs, and ensures a resilient energy grid for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

Aaron Bast
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