



## **Support the Ratepayer Protection Act (SB0998)**

Dear Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

We are [Action in Montgomery](#) (AIM), a nonpartisan, interfaith community organization representing thousands of Montgomery County residents. We organize with people in congregations, schools, and neighborhoods to build power for policies that make our communities more fair and livable for everyone. We are asking you to support the Ratepayer Protection Act (SB0998) when it is considered by the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

Gas bills for Baltimore and Anne Arundel County (Baltimore Gas & Electric and Columbia Gas) have tripled in the last 10 years because under the current STRIDE law, these companies are replacing all the pipes in their networks with new high-pressure pipes, then charging households the cost over time with interest. The Ratepayer Protection Act will instead require gas utilities to prioritize safety and be cost-effective in making infrastructure upgrades, such as by repairing pipes instead of unnecessarily replacing them. This would prevent such severe utility cost increases from being placed on residents of Montgomery and other counties as we have seen in Baltimore.

By limiting wasteful expansion of gas infrastructure, this bill also will incentivize the electrification of homes, which will improve our communities' health and our climate. As part of the Beyond Gas coalition with Interfaith Power and Light and the Sierra Club, AIM's team of tenant leaders has conducted hundreds of tests of NO<sub>2</sub> gas levels emitted from residents' gas stoves, and published a study showing that over 50% of the 394 homes tested in Maryland had unhealthy levels of NO<sub>2</sub> gas. These numbers are based on the EPA's standards for outdoor air quality. NO<sub>2</sub> causes asthma and other respiratory illnesses, and affects brain development in children.

We are counting on you to pass the Ratepayer Protection Act to prevent our utility bills from unnecessarily rising and to support the transition from dirty to clean energy in our homes. Thank you for your consideration.