



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 998- Natural Gas- Strategic Infrastructure Development and Enhancement (Ratepayer Protection Act)

TO: Chair Watson and members of the Economic Matters Committee
FROM: Phil Webster, PhD, Lead Advocate, Climate Change
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.
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The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland strongly supports **SB 998- The RatePayer Protection Act**.

The STRIDE law created a financial incentive for gas utilities to install new gas pipelines and equipment. However, the law lacks sufficient guardrails, which has led to wasteful spending, massive utility profits, and dramatic rate hikes—without delivering meaningful benefits to communities. Without reform, Maryland gas customers are projected to pay **\$40 BILLION for the flawed pipeline replacement program** over the next twenty years.

In 2022, Maryland enacted the Climate Solutions Now Act, directing the state to shift away from fossil fuels to power our homes. The STRIDE law is at cross purposes with the Climate Solutions Now Act and is, in effect, creating a “pipeline to nowhere” at the expense of Maryland ratepayers!

The UULM-MD is a faith-based advocacy organization based on Unitarian Universalist (UU) Values, including Interdependence (honoring the interdependent web of all existence) and Justice (where all feel welcome and can thrive). Working to mitigate, adapt to, and build resilience for climate change is central to our beliefs.

The UU belief in justice for all, especially low and moderate income Marylanders who are at greater risk due to continuing rate hikes, requires us to support **SB 998**. The UU belief in the interdependence of life, requires that we support **SB 998** aligning STRIDE with the Climate Solutions Now Act.

We urge a FAVORABLE report on **SB 998** in committee.

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