



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 643

Public Utilities – Energy Generation and Transmission

Date: March 6, 2025	Position: UNFAVORABLE
To: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee	From: Gussie Maguire MD Staff Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **OPPOSES** Senate Bill 643, which allows for the construction and operation of new natural gas-burning energy generation systems. In addition to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and other pollutants, gas-fired power plants emit nitrogen oxides (NOx) into the atmosphere. Atmospheric nitrogen, from power plants, vehicle emissions, and other sources, enters the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries through either dry deposition of particles or attached to precipitation, and contributes about one-third of nitrogen of the nitrogen reaching the Bay¹.

NOx emissions have declined over time, thanks in large part to reductions from point sources like power plants². Introducing additional gas-burning energy generation systems to the state of Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay's airshed would go back on that progress, increasing nitrogen loads to the Bay and exacerbating algal blooms and anoxic dead zones. Larger dead zones imperil already-stressed aquatic species, including striped bass and menhaden.

Finally, despite natural gas's reputation as a "clean burning" fuel, its emissions pose the exact same threats to the climate. Natural gas is primarily composed of methane, which is even more effective than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere. Any leaks in pipelines to or equipment at a natural gas-burning facility would contribute methane, while normal energy generation activity would also release low levels of methane along with carbon dioxide. Increased GHG emissions do not align with the state's goals and investments already made to combat climate change.

CBF urges the Committee's UNFAVORABLE report on SB 643.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

¹ <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/issues/threats-to-the-bay/air-pollution>

² https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-02/documents/appendix_1_atmos_n_deposition_allocations_final.pdf

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