

CHESAPEAKE

PSR PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony: SB0998 Natural Gas - Strategic Infrastructure Development and Enhancement (Ratepayer Protection Act)

Position: Favorable

Hearing: March 13, 2025

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) strongly supports SB998 which would require the utilities to file with the Public Service Commission plans for work that reflects what is necessary for the safety of the gas system and consider alternates to replacement because every step from extraction to ending up in our homes, natural gas: methane leaks.¹

CPSR is a statewide evidence-based organization of over 900 physicians and other health professionals and supporters that addresses existential public health threats: nuclear weapons, the climate crisis, and the issues of pollution and toxic effects on health, as seen through the intersectional lens of environmental, racial, and social justice

Maryland needs to reduce the use of natural gas for climate and cost reasons. I would also add for health reasons. A study in Boston found that these hazardous chemicals also entered our: benzene, heptane, toluene, hexane collected from gas stoves and outdoor appliance lines.² Gas in the home is associated with an increased risk of children having asthma, possibly related to the nitrogen dioxide created with the indoor combustion of methane.³ With the leaking gas, over 20 years, the methane would trap about 80 times as much heat as the CO₂.⁴

So for climate and health reasons, gas is not the best choice for the fuel that we use and now add that with the green light the Stride program has given to the gas utilities, instead of moving

¹ <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/sheryl-carter/gas-leaks-and-its-worse-we-thought>.

² <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.1c08298>

³ <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyt150>

⁴ <https://climate.mit.edu/ask-mit/why-do-we-compare-methane-carbon-dioxide-over-100-year-timeframe-are-we-underrating>

toward a safer source of energy for our future, it has allowed an expansion of gas infrastructure at a high cost to ratepayers who pay with our wallets and our health.

The Ratepayer Protection Act will stop wasteful spending on gas infrastructure that is driving up our bills by requiring spending to prioritize safety and be cost effective.

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility urges a favorable vote on SB0998 that will reduce costs for ratepayers, help reduce greenhouse gases and have health benefits as well.

Gwen L. DuBois MD, MPH

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

gdubois@jhsph.edu