

FAVORABLE – House Bill 903
Courts – Global Warming and Climate Change – Prohibited Actions
(Ratepayer Protection Act of 2025)
House Judiciary Committee

Columbia Gas of Maryland, Inc. (Columbia) supports House Bill 903. The legislation prohibits the State or a local government, or an agency of the State or a local government from filing an action for monetary damages or alleged economic damages against a business for the adverse effects of global warming or climate change in the state.

The Maryland business community has concerns there are those in Maryland who seek litigation to pay for climate or global warming mitigation programs for conduct that allegedly contributed to climate change.

Columbia points out that in late January 2025, an Anne Arundel County Circuit Court Judge dismissed lawsuits by Anne Arundel County and the City of Annapolis against fossil fuel companies stating that such claims are preempted by federal law. Similar claims made by Baltimore City were dismissed by the Baltimore City Circuit Court in July 2024. Future legal actions related to climate change pursued by the State or a local government, or an agency of the State or a local government may also be preempted by federal law. This legislation would clarify such actions related to monetary or alleged economic damages may not be pursued.

The legislation continues current health, environmental, zoning or any other applicable legal protections for Marylanders specifically stating the legislation does not “prohibit the federal government, the State or a local government from enforcing health, environmental, zoning or any other applicable law or relieve a business from the responsibility of complying with the terms of any applicable federal, state or local law”.

Most recently, the House Speaker and the Senate President stated Maryland needs an “all of the above” policy for electric generation which includes the use of natural gas to generate it. Companies and investors are needed to build that natural gas electricity generation in Maryland to ensure the reliability of Maryland’s electrical grid and the adequacy of electric resources.

Legislation such as House Bill 903 supports this “all of the above” energy policy and would demonstrate to those looking to invest in and build natural gas fired electric generation facilities that they would not be subject to litigation seeking monetary damages or alleged economic damages by Maryland or a local government or agency. If enacted, the bill would send a strong signal to the financial markets for electric generators to potentially invest in Maryland, which is precisely how Maryland needs to address its current energy challenges.

Consequently, Columbia supports House Bill 903 as appropriately crafted policy and therefore urges a favorable report.

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