

Timothy R. Troxell, CEcD
Senior Advisor, Government Affairs
301-830-0121
ttroxell@firstenergycorp.com

10802 Bower Avenue
Williamsport, MD 21795

SUPPORT – House Bill 0444

**Criminal Law – Interference with Critical Infrastructure or a Public Safety Answering Point – Penalties
Judiciary Committee
Tuesday, February 4, 2025**

Potomac Edison, a subsidiary of FirstEnergy Corp., serves approximately 285,000 customers in all or parts of seven Maryland counties (Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, Howard, Montgomery, and Washington). FirstEnergy is dedicated to safety, reliability, and operational excellence. Its ten electric distribution companies form one of the nation's largest investor-owned electric systems, serving customers in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, West Virginia, and Maryland.

Favorable

Potomac Edison / FirstEnergy strongly supports House Bill 0444 - *Criminal Law – Interference with Critical Infrastructure or a Public Safety Answering Point – Penalties*. This legislation addresses threats to actions intended to obstruct the access to, or operation of, critical infrastructure by codifying both its definition as well as the penalty for violations.

Potomac Edison / FirstEnergy requests a Favorable report on HB-444. Enhancing the security and reliability of Maryland's critical infrastructure, particularly the electric grid that serves our communities, is crucial.

The electric grid is a vital component of Maryland's critical infrastructure. It ensures the continuous delivery of electricity to homes, businesses, government agencies, and other essential services. Any intentional interference with the network could lead to significant disruptions – which can then affect public safety, economic stability, and the well-being of our customers.

House Bill 0444 aims to strengthen the legal protections against actions that intentionally disrupt or impair critical infrastructure operations. By prohibiting such actions and establishing penalties for violations, the bill serves as a deterrent against malicious activities targeting essential services. The proposed legislation also aligns with industry efforts to safeguard critical infrastructure. It complements existing measures by providing a legal framework to address intentional disruptions, thereby supporting our ability to maintain reliable electric service.

Potomac Edison / FirstEnergy believes House Bill 0444 takes a necessary step toward ensuring the security and resilience of Maryland's critical infrastructure. Given the sensitive nature of utility critical infrastructure, the need to deter actions that may harm it, and the benefits of having clearly defined penalties for taking such actions, we urge the committee to support this bill. We appreciate your consideration of our perspective on this issue and believe that protecting the essential services upon which our communities depend is vital.

For the above reasons, Potomac Edison / FirstEnergy respectfully request a Favorable vote on HB-444.